



CENTRO DE CONVENCIONES
CARTAGENA DE INDIAS

XXV SI CONGRESS
CARTAGENA,
COLOMBIA
2-3-4 MARCH 2017

SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL

From the XXIV to the XXV Congress

Report of the Secretary General

Published by
Socialist International
PO BOX 67973
London
SW4 4DU
United Kingdom

From the XXIV to the XXV Congress

From the dire consequences of the financial crisis to the deepening of conflicts in several parts of the world, our International has during these last four years been an international movement that, with commitment, perseverance and conviction, has never given up its deep belief in a better world.

Indeed, in the midst of an economy that has become more unequal in the different parts of the world and globally, the current harsh realities in a number of States where people are suffering the disasters of cruel wars right before our eyes and global threats such as those of climate change or terror, or there is forced displacement of people on a huge scale, the Socialist International has not ceased to stand up for the values and principles that define our movement.

With democracy at its heart, our organisation has been able to set priorities and to develop and implement numerous initiatives across continents, across peoples, across cultures, in a serious effort to contribute to the resolution of conflicts and to peace, to secure freedoms and rights for all, and to advance the vision of a more fair and equal economy with opportunities for everyone. As we have expanded the reach and presence of our movement, at the same time we have strengthened the global and international character of our organisation.

These past years, we have also been facing new challenges, such as the emergence of a narrow vision in some countries that prioritises self-interest, individualism, and the promotion of simple responses to interconnected global issues with purely national answers. At a time when multilateralism has been the target, organisations such as the Socialist International have gained an increased relevance as a platform for raising our voices collectively and shaping together the road ahead.

The XXV Congress defines well the priorities of our movement in the current times. It is about Peace, and the defence of the freedoms and rights that preserve it. It is about Equality and building societies that should be more fair and more inclusive. It is about Solidarity, which guarantees opportunities for everyone, and finally, it is about gaining a more humane future for us all.

In the following pages, some of the moments of our collective journey from the XXIV to the XXV Congress are reflected.

Luis Ayala
Secretary General

XXIV Congress

XXIV Congress of the Socialist International, Cape Town

For a new internationalism and a new culture of solidarity

30 August-1 September 2012



The XXIV Congress of the Socialist International met in Cape Town, South Africa, on August 30 - September 1, under the heading "For a New Internationalism and a New Culture of Solidarity". Bringing together leaders and delegates of member parties from around the world, including a number of heads of state and government and specially invited guests, the event was attended by representatives of 130 parties and organisations.

The African National Congress (ANC) hosted the event in the centennial year of its foundation. It was the first Congress in the history of the International to take place in Africa.

The agenda comprised four key themes that are of central importance to the Socialist International today: 'For an economy with jobs, growth and social protection: the social democratic response to the financial crisis'; The struggle for rights and freedoms: strengthening representative democracy and gaining new democracies in the world'; 'For a common road to peace, sustainability and cooperation: the need to secure multilateralism'; and 'For a new internationalism and a new culture of solidarity among people and between nations'.

A minute of silence observed in memory of John Atta Mills, Ghana's inspirational late president, whose work remains a testament to the achievements of the social democratic movement in the continent.

Introducing the proceedings, SI President George Papandreou thanked the hosts and expressed gratitude for the welcome and warm hospitality members had received in Cape Town.

Deputy President of South Africa and of the ANC, Kgalema Motlanthe, opened the Congress with a welcoming speech. He thanked George Papandreou, SI Secretary-General Luis Ayala, and all the delegates and guests present, on behalf of the ANC and his democratic nation, for holding the meeting in Africa. Motlanthe conveyed his appreciation for the continued support of the SI in the struggles of the African people against colonialism and racism, highlighting the significance that the event took place during the ANC's centennial celebrations. He remarked on the similarity between the foundations of the ANC and the SI, both being inspired by the desire to change the world for the better, for freedom, social justice and solidarity. The ANC, he said, places great emphasis on internationalism, working with other democratic organisations in the pursuit of the renaissance of the African continent. Challenges we all now face, he explained, include reducing the control of wealth by transnational corporations, the homogenisation of the

media, and reforming a weakened system of global governance. Urging the Congress to come together to find a clear way forward on these issues, he called on the SI to continue being a force for the mobilisation of the world progressive movement for a better world and a better Africa. He concluded by observing a common saying in South Africa ‘working together, in solidarity, we can do more’.

Following on, George Papandreou gave his opening speech. He acknowledged the struggles the ANC has undergone, praising its leadership for never giving up and the proud men and women of Africa who continue to carry a deep sense of hope and vigour for change. ‘We are honoured that we are here’ said Papandreou ‘to celebrate with you, the 100 years of struggles which came to fruition under the inspired leadership of Nelson Mandela’.



Papandreou emphasised the importance of the values and commitment of the Socialist International from its inception to our contemporary global platform. Recalling the political events he experienced from his youth, he remarked upon the inspiration the SI had offered social democrats throughout its history. We must continue to fight for change, to address the problems of the global economy and restructure the market to fit the needs of all people, he said. Reminding participants that the economic crisis of 2008 should not have happened, he stressed the necessity to ensure the

protection of future generations, sustainable resources and a conflict-free world. The SI must continue to work, Papandreou said, ‘to succeed in transforming our global economy into one with democratic governance and regulation that serves our people, for a just global society’.

For an economy with jobs, growth and social protection: the social democratic response to the financial crisis

The first main theme of the Congress began with a significant address on the state of the global economy by Elio Di Rupo, Prime Minister of Belgium and SI Vice President. Di Rupo emphasised that the financial sector is out of control, causing enormous damage to the real economy, with impunity. Stock markets are capable of destroying businesses and wiping out employment within seconds; without supervision the financial sector lies in absolute speculation. This constitutes one of the biggest contemporary challenges for the progressive movement, he stressed. States and governments should not be subordinate to financial markets. He explained that the only way to ensure greater social justice and regain prosperity for all is to take them under control. He stipulated that well thought through reforms must be applied to the financial sector. These can only be achieved, he said, by avoiding the liberal and conservative policies that currently risk steering us toward social chaos.

Phil Angelides, Chair of the US Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission, from the United States Democrats, was a specially invited keynote speaker on this highly pertinent theme. Angelides gave a thought-provoking speech on the roots of the financial crisis and power structures in the current global financial sector. Global unemployment levels, he said, clearly demonstrate the ramifications of the crisis are far from over. Angelides warned that conservatives wishing to disassociate their market practices from blame could rewrite history, implying the crash could have happened at any time, or have been a result of over spending on welfare. The crash, he explained was due to ruthless risk-taking at the expense of innocent people. We must now ensure greater market regulation and accountability, he said, and further we must address both the global economy and climate change, investing in energy efficiency for a green economy. A truly democratic economic system with opportunities and financial justice for all can be achieved, he concluded, if we are able to learn from the previous mistakes.

A further contribution on this theme was heard from Ségolène Royal, SI Vice-President (PS, France). Other speeches were given by Trevor Manuel, Minister of Planning of South Africa; Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu,

SI Vice-President and leader of CHP, Turkey; Alfred Gusenbauer, SI Vice-President, (SPÖ, Austria), Sergei Stanishev, President of the PES; Beatriz Paredes, SI Vice-President, (PRI, Mexico); Hannes Swoboda, President of the S&D Group in the European Parliament; Ouafa Hajji, the new President of SI Women; Carlos Eduardo Vieira da Cunha, SI Vice-President, (PDT, Brazil); Fatallah Oualalou, former Finance and Economy Minister of Morocco (USFP, Morocco); Manuel Laguarda, (PS, Uruguay); Purificación Causapié, (PSOE, Spain); Ousmane Tanor Dieng, SI Vice-President (PS, Senegal); Christoph Zöpel, (SPD, Germany); Liu Jieyi, Vice-Minister, (CPC, China); Svetlina Yolcheva, (PBSD, Bulgaria); Manuel Rosales, leader of UNT, Venezuela; and Rafael Michelini, (NE, Uruguay).

Following discussions on this first theme, a resolution outlining the SI's priorities was unanimously adopted. The statement stressed that a lack of action would slow global economic growth, widening inequalities between countries, and threatening the progress and implementation of the UN Millennium Development Goals. The SI supports a progressive and integrated approach to the crisis, with financial, economic, social, and environmental concerns given equal importance. Further, those accountable for the crisis must take responsibility for the rectification of its consequences. A more progressive fiscal strategy would stabilise the economy and protect the future and this can be achieved through financing tools such as the introduction of a Financial Transaction Tax. It was again recognised that austerity cannot be the remedy for the crisis but instead a new paradigm is needed to secure growth and shield the economy against speculative attacks. Transparent, effective regulation must be ensured in the banking sector and a new multipolar Global Financial Architecture should support these goals, reduce injustice and guarantee inter-generational fairness.

Elections

SI members at the Congress in South Africa took part in an electoral process introduced for the first time in the history of the Socialist International.

Following the decisions taken by the Council in the January 2012 meeting in San Jose, Costa Rica, the vote would be formal, competitive and open to all full members of the Socialist International that had complied with the statutory requirements. The registered candidates would further be elected by a secret ballot.

The election of the SI President took place first. President George Papandreou, the sole candidate, was unanimously re-elected by a show of hands and he graciously accepted the vote for his continued presidency.

Votes for the Secretary General and the Vice-Presidents followed. Candidates for the post of Secretary General were incumbent SI Secretary General Luis Ayala and SI Vice-President Mona Sahlin from the SAP, Sweden. Both candidates were first given the floor for a presentation to the Congress, to detail their ambitions and goals for the future of the organisation.

Member parties cast their votes for the positions of SI Secretary General and those for the Vice-Presidents in a ballot box. This was overseen by an Electoral Commission that comprised representation from all continents: Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, former Prime Minister of Mali, Martín Torrijos, former President of Panama, Senator Mian Raza Rabbani, from PPP, Pakistan, Achim Post, International Secretary of SPD, Germany, and Tero Shemeikka, International Secretary from SDP Finland, who headed the commission. After votes were counted, the head of the Electoral Commission, Tero Shemeikka, from the Finnish Social Democratic Party, announced the results. Luis Ayala was re-elected with the majority of the votes, which he warmly accepted. Ayala gave his thanks to Mona Sahlin for her commitment to the SI.

Thirty-three Vice-Presidents were elected from a ballot paper including candidates from all regions through a system that secured a fair geographical representation and also ensured gender balance as stipulated in the Statutes. The Congress mandated the next Council to elect three Vice-Presidents for the remaining three posts open in the Presidium.

The struggle for rights and freedoms: strengthening representative democracy and gaining new democracies in the world

The second theme of the Congress, strengthening global democracy, opened with a special address by the President of the Republic of South Africa, and of the ANC, H.E. Jacob Zuma. The President gave a warm welcome, thanking all the members present and expressing his honour that South Africa was hosting the event and pride that it took place in the ANC's centennial year. He expressed particular thanks for the solidarity that had been extended by SI parties to the oppressed South African masses during the struggle against colonial oppression and apartheid. Confirming the importance of the Congress, he explained that an effective response to all the challenges discussed during the event, in line with the main theme of the Congress, would pave the way for our common objective: a new internationalism and a new culture of solidarity.

Jacob Zuma examined the adverse effects of globalisation in order to illustrate this. While globalisation, he recognised, has produced profoundly positive effects, it has also caused extremely negative consequences. Three quarters of the global population have become victims of the globalisation process, and now suffer deepening poverty and inequality. Under the current political and economic scenarios the gap between rich and poor has widened, and nations are still vulnerable to military conflict. To tackle this, he stressed that lasting solutions and a democratic multilateralism were needed, rather than the increasing unilateralism that can be seen today. The Socialist International, he said, has been vital in pursuing these goals, fostering unity and achieving great strides in all regions of the world, including on the African continent.



On the theme of Democracy, Navinchandra Ramgoolam, Prime Minister and Leader of the Labour Party of Mauritius, addressed the Congress giving a motivating speech on the democratic processes that he had fought for in his country. Further valuable contributions were heard from Marian Lupu, Leader of PDM, Moldova; Sukhbaataryn Batbold, former Prime Minister of Mongolia, (MPP, Mongolia); Stefan Löfven, Chair of SAP, Sweden; Yasmine Durate, (ANC, South Africa); Mian Raza Rabbani, (PPP, Pakistan); Juan Moscoso del Prado, (PSOE, Spain); Mohamed Ghaleb Ahmed Alsaqladi, (YSP,

Yemen); Ibrahima N'Diaye, (ADEMA-PASJ, Mali); Zharmakhan Tuyakbay, Chair of OSDP, Kazakhstan; Zita Gurmai, President of PES Women; Marcelo Stubrin, (UCR, Argentina); Kofi Awoonor, (NDC, Ghana); Omar Barboza, (UNT, Venezuela); Kalla Ankourao, (PNDS, Niger); Gaoussou Touré, (RPG, Guinea); Denis MacShane, (The Labour Party, Great Britain); Bachir Sayed, (Polisario Front, Western Sahara); Wenceslao Mansogo, (CPDS, Equatorial Guinea); Beatriz Talegón, Secretary General of IUSY; Nouzha Chekrouni, SI Vice-President, (USFP, Morocco); Ahmed Ould Daddah, SI Vice-President and leader of RFD, Mauritania; Khalid Azizi, (KDP, Iran); Martin Ziguélé, (MLPC, Central African Republic); Umut Oran, (CHP, Turkey); Chantal Kambiwa, SI Vice-President, (SDF, Cameroon); Gia Jorjoliani (SDD, Georgia); and Pia Locatelli, (PSI, Italy).

On the second main theme of the Congress, a resolution was unanimously adopted that underlined the commitment to further strengthen democracy across the globe. The resolution highlighted that currently more than 1.5 billion people – almost a quarter of the world's population – continue to suffer daily under state-sanctioned repression, reiterating SI's commitment to challenge undemocratic regimes. Support was pledged for the Arab Spring nations of Tunisia, Yemen, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Syria and Bahrain. In Africa, support was expressed for the democratic efforts in Niger, Guinea, Senegal and Zambia, while deep concern was stated over Equatorial Guinea and Guinea-Bissau. In Mali, the SI expressed its full support for its member parties in restoring democracy and their efforts to secure the integrity and unity of the nation. In Mauritania, the SI denounced again the denial of citizens' right to free and democratic elections, calling for a full reinstatement of those rights. In Europe, international pressure was again called on to secure the release of all political prisoners in Belarus, where the social democratic leader Mikalai Statkevich, former presidential candidate, remains in prison. Further concern was voiced over democratic restrictions in Ukraine, Georgia, Turkey and Russia. Solidarity was reiterated with the new full SI member party, A Just

Russia Party. Deep concern was conveyed over the 'parliamentary coup' in Paraguay with a call to support those in the country seeking democracy. An SI mission was announced to visit Venezuela in order to observe the presidential elections to be held in October 2012, where SI members and other like-minded forces would be participating in a coalition with a single candidate.

For a common road to peace, sustainability and cooperation: the need to secure multilateralism

Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, newly elected Chairperson of the African Union Commission, gave a keynote speech on the third main theme on the Congress Agenda. Speaking on the importance of multilateralism, she described how humanity could find solutions to common problems through cooperation. Paying tribute to the work of the United Nations, Dlamini-Zuma observed that it represents 'the greatest collective achievement of humankind'. She stressed that the reform of the UN and the Bretton Wood's Institutions must be at the top of the agenda and, that by defending and strengthening the United Nations we can advance an inclusive multilateralism. There has never been a better time to move for change, she explained, and we must now unite around these issues, as we have done around the debt crisis and the isolation of apartheid. The multilateral approach she called for would confront injustice and promote peace, as development is not sustainable without justice. She emphasised the difference the Socialist International could make in promoting and securing multilateralism and concluded by acknowledging the sense of urgency the SI Congress must convey, to translate our words into action and move our values to centre stage.

The Congress heard further contributions on the importance of multilateralism and a sustainable world from Satyaurat Chaturvedi, (India National Congress); Hermes Binner, (PS, Argentina); Sergey Mironov, leader of A Just Russia Party, Russia; Nabeel Shath, (Fatah, Palestine); Avshalom Vilan, (Meretz, Israel); Mustafa Bargouthi, (PNI, Palestine); and Hikmet Mohammed Kareem, (PUK, Iraq).

On this theme, a resolution was adopted underlining the necessity of multilateral efforts to construct a sustainable, prosperous, just and peaceful world society. In this text, a number of regional issues are included and among them deep concern was expressed over the situation in Syria, where the Assad regime refuses to accept change. A call was made to end hostilities and begin a Syrian-led process of transition to democracy. Support was given for a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The SI further decided to re-establish a Special Working Group on the Kurdish Question with the aim to advance and protect, in accordance with international law, the rights, the security and the improvement of the living conditions of the Kurdish people.

The situation in Western Sahara also featured among the issues addressed in the resolution, reflecting the involvement of the International in the search for a just, peaceful and lasting solution to this conflict. Other themes included in the resolution were the situation in Cyprus and the Falklands/Malvinas conflict.

For a new internationalism and a new culture of solidarity among people and between nations

The final theme of the Congress underpinned the discussions held during the event. Ibrahima Boubacar Keita, former Prime Minister of Mali and Leader of the RPM, Mali; João Ribeiro, (PS Portugal); Lise Christoffersen, (DNA, Norway); Viviana Piñeiro, (IUSY); Pendukeni Iivula-Ithana, SI Vice-President and Secretary General of SWAPO, Namibia; Gültan Kisanak, Co-Chair of the BDP, Turkey; Nicos Hadjistephanou, (EDEK, Cyprus); and Esther Mordoch, (Meretz, Israel) gave speeches on the importance of a renewed solidarity between people and nations.

Contributions emphasised that a renewed internationalism should ensure progressive change, spread democracy, enhance cooperative security, share collective burdens and strengthen democratic international institutions. Calling for greater world governance, it was not only stressed that organisations such as the IMF, World Bank and the World Trade Organisation need strengthening, but that there is also a need for social and cultural reforms. The need to advance with a new internationalism will allow for more responsible political systems, democracy and freedom for the people as emphasised by former Prime Minister Keita, or the need for more foreign policy and less foreign affairs as underscored by Ribeiro.

The Congress reaffirmed the need to prioritise solidarity in facing challenges such as the consequences of the financial crisis, deepening global inequalities and the abuse of human rights and freedoms in regions across the world. 'A New Internationalism and a New Culture of Solidarity', in conclusion, together



constitute the central pillar not only to find solutions to today's problems but also to promote new opportunities and development for every country. In short, this new internationalism and new culture of solidarity forms both the road and the requirement to achieve a just global society of rights and

freedoms for all.

The Congress confirmed membership decisions taken by the Councils in the inter-Congress period and adopted changes to the Statutes to reflect the decisions on SI reforms agreed by the previous Council held in Costa Rica in January 2012. The Congress also agreed to empower the next Council to take decisions on membership with full effect in the current inter-Congress period.

As the Congress concluded, President Jacob Zuma addressed the gathering with a farewell speech, emphasising the increasing role of Africa in the world. He expressed his belief that the SI will provide even greater leadership in determining what type of democratic world we can live in and that its voice will be heard now more than ever.

George Papandreou, in closing the Congress, thanked all the members for their constructive and vital contributions to the debates. We will continue, he said, to be active in the global arena, and to create greater dialogue and understanding. The Socialist International is now stronger than ever before and this has been demonstrated in the internal democracy shown in this Congress.

Presidium

SI Presidium meeting at United Nations during the UNGA debates

26 September 2012



This year's annual meeting of SI Presidium members at the United Nations in connection with the General Assembly debates was held at the UN Headquarters in New York on Wednesday 26 September. Members of the new Presidium, having been elected only a few weeks before at the XXIV SI Congress held in South Africa, were of the opinion in Cape Town that this initiative implemented in recent years should be maintained despite

the short time frame on this occasion, given the opportunity which these meetings have provided both to have a bearing on the main issues of the global agenda being addressed at the United Nations, and for direct exchanges with other SI members in government present in New York at the same time.

The meeting focused on three main issues: Responses to the financial crisis by international institutions, regional organisations, groups of nations and individual countries; Common policies for progressive governments to sustain social and economic priorities in the current financial climate; and Defining priorities and emphases on the global agenda in regard to security, democracy and sustainability.

Members of the Presidium attending included SI President **George Papandreou**, who chaired the meeting, the SI Secretary General, **Luis Ayala**, and Vice-Presidents **Victor Benoit**, Union of Haitian Social Democrats, **Nouzha Chekrouni**, USFP, Morocco; **Ahmed Ould Daddah**, RFD, Mauritania; **Ousmane Tanor Dieng**, PS, Senegal; **Marcelo Ebrard Casaubón**, PRD, Mexico; **Alfred Gusenbauer**, SPÖ, Austria; **Eero Heinäluoma**, SDP, Finland; **Pendukeni Iivula-Ithana**, SWAPO, Namibia; **Chantal Kambiwa**, SDF, Cameroon; **Beatriz Paredes**, PRI, Mexico; **Henry Ramos**, AD, Venezuela; **Ségolène Royal**, PS, France; Prime Minister **Portia Simpson-Miller**, PNP, Jamaica; **Miguel Vargas Maldonado**, PRD, Dominican Republic; **Martín Torrijos**, PRD, Panama; and **Ouafa Hajji**, President of SIW. The Presidium was joined by H.E. President **Hifikepunye Pohamba** of Namibia, **Zlatko Lagumdžija**, Foreign Minister of Bosnia-Herzegovina; **Maite Nkoana-Mashabane**, Foreign Minister of South Africa; and **Hina Rabbani Khar**, Foreign Minister of Pakistan; **Alicia Bárcena**, the Executive Secretary of ECLAC; **José Miguel Insulza**, Secretary General of the Organisation of American States and **Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma**, Chairperson-elect of the African Union Commission.

The work of the International since 2008 on the financial crisis and its different phases was highlighted, particularly the work by the SI's Commission on Global Financial Issues, the various meetings of the Councils and regional Committees, all of which had addressed this matter. In the contributions on this subject, participants noted that the hoped for change in the financial system, the banking sector and practices linked to the origins of the crisis was yet to be seen and the SI's position adopted at the Cape Town Congress was strongly reaffirmed and was welcomed by others within the UN system.

Building on the work done by the different SI bodies and reflected in the various statements made since the crisis began, it was considered important at this stage to concentrate in the forthcoming period on our political response to the economic crisis and to work to ensure its implementation. In this regard, there was strong support for the idea of undertaking talks with international financial institutions such as the IMF, the World Bank and regional development banks, among others, and further, to advance our progressive agenda among the leaders, our members and friends within the G20.

It was observed that the world was very different now to what it was only a few years ago, as the crisis had continued evolving, and today the situation in Europe was the most complex, raising fundamental questions about the type of system our societies were built upon, and the need to have one that was productive, that generates employment and equality. It was perceived that we were facing a profound structural crisis and a new thinking was required.

Also noted was that the main economic engines, the US, China and Europe, were in trouble, with Europe suffering most dramatically from the crisis with unemployment and loss of markets threatening further instability. Concern was expressed over the repercussions of the financial crisis in other regions of the world not directly suffering the same economic downturn, such as Latin America and Africa, where there existed social or political insecurities. In the interest of preserving or gaining new democracies, it was said that measures had to be promoted to combat corruption, drug trafficking, mafias and terrorism, as well as programmes for assisting political parties where needed. An agenda focussing on equality was highlighted as a key area of work deserving SI attention in the coming period, and the particular vulnerability of women and youth was again underlined, especially where there existed limited access to education and opportunities.

Participants also highlighted the need to prioritise on the global agenda, the reinforcement of inter-cultural dialogue, the promotion of solidarity and south-south cooperation.

Bringing peace and democracy to areas of conflict was also addressed, notably the situation in the Sahel and in parts of the Arab world. The Socialist International's traditional strength in handling regional conflicts was highlighted by participants and there was broad support for the SI undertaking initiatives in this sense. As it had been agreed at the Congress, the SI would set up an action group on Syria and would

also assume a role in regard to the conflict in Mali, in contact with its member parties there. SI initiatives carried out in conjunction with the United Nations were welcomed on key issues of the global agenda, in the interest of multilateralism as underlined at the Cape Town Congress, including these annual Presidium meetings at the headquarters of the UN in New York in connection with the General Assembly debates.

Meeting in the aftermath of the XXIV SI Congress, members of the Presidium commented on its success and their satisfaction at the democratic and transparent way in which it had been carried out. Acknowledgements were also made to fellow Presidium member H.E. Jacob Zuma, President of South Africa, and to the ANC for their hospitality in hosting the Congress. Keen to build on that success, it was noted that the next SI Council would take place in the first part of 2013, either at the end of January or in February. At that time the various committees and working groups for this inter-congress period would be established and priorities for their work would be outlined.

Pakistan

SI condemns shooting of schoolgirl

11 October 2012

The Socialist International was deeply shocked and appalled to hear of the brutal shooting of 14-year old Malala Yousafzai by terrorists in Pakistan. Malala, from Mingora, Swat, has been a young campaigner for girls and women's education and rights. The SI extends its thoughts and support to Malala and her family, hoping for her fast recovery.

The SI also expresses its full solidarity with the government of Pakistan and the Pakistan People's Party, and supports all their efforts and their unwavering commitment to combat terrorism and protect the rights and freedoms of the Pakistani people.



The SI strongly defends the rights of girls and women to education and condemns this despicable terrorist activity, and the intimidation and victimisation of children.

Two Taliban members targeted Malala as she returned home from school. She was shot in the head and neck whilst surrounded by other children on the school bus. Malala survived the attack and is currently under critical care in hospital in Rawalpindi.

*SI Secretary General with Malala Yousafzai,
United Nations Headquarters, New York, 2013*

Montenegro

2012 parliamentary elections

17 October 2012

The Socialist International warmly congratulates our two member parties in Montenegro, the Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) and the Social Democratic Party of Montenegro (SDPM), on the results of the parliamentary elections held on 14 October. The votes will allow them, with the other members of the coalition and new partners, to form the next government of Montenegro.

The SI is proud of the achievements of our comrades in Montenegro that have allowed consistent progress and advances in building a society which, based on the values and principles that we share, offers today more opportunities and brighter prospects for the future for all their citizens.

In their continuing journey the DPS and the SDPM can count on the support of the Socialist International and we look forward to working further together for our common goal of strengthening and advancing social democracy.

IPU

SI at 127th Assembly of Inter-Parliamentary Union in Quebec City

23 October 2012



Members of Parliament from SI member parties from different continents accredited to the 127th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), which took place in Québec City from 21 to 26 October 2012, held an informal meeting on 23 October convened by the Socialist International to exchange views on the agenda and work of the Assembly and on the establishment of a parliamentary social democratic network within the framework of the IPU and its 155 member parliaments.

Present at the meeting were parliamentarians from Australia, Belgium, Botswana, Canada, Cape Verde, Cyprus, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, New Zealand, Niger, Palestine, Pakistan, Poland, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tanzania, Turkey, United Kingdom and Venezuela. The meeting was chaired by the SI Secretary General.

Participants also used the opportunity to present a brief outline of some matters of concern. These included issues relating to political developments in their countries, and in some cases affecting the work of their parliaments or where there were restrictions on parliamentarians. Amongst these was the situation affecting Mongolia, where members of parliament from the MPP, an SI member party, are being denied the right to a parliamentary caucus and where democratic issues resulting from the last elections exist. Also highlighted were cases affecting parliamentarians from Turkey and Palestine who are imprisoned; the threat posed by terrorism to people and to the political institutions in certain countries, as for instance in Pakistan where the SI-member party, the PPP, is defending democracy; human rights violations, issues relating to gender or sexuality, or the existence of a lack of respect for the work of parliaments, including in established democracies. It was also underlined that in too many instances the management of economies and capital flows often eroded democracy and social democratic objectives. These were challenges which social democratic parliamentarians around the world were working to overcome.

There was a strong feeling among participants that alongside the well established regional parliamentary groups in the IPU, it was important that social democratic parliamentarians from all continents should continue to convene and pursue efforts to strengthen the political dimension of their work within the IPU. The recognition of this political dimension was borne out by the fact that, responding favourably to our request, the IPU had granted an official status within the organisation to the Socialist International.

Participants were also very keen to maximise the potential of the IPU and the opportunities it offered to strengthen the ideals of parliamentary democracy worldwide, and to this end agreed on developing as

broadly as possible the network of members of parliament from our political family thus contributing positively to the work of the IPU, both in content and direction. In this context, it was pointed out that at times there could be seen an increase in fundamentalist positions in the IPU assemblies, so no substantial headway was being made on issues that were priorities for our parties, such as gender equality and other rights. It was further considered by some that procedural matters in the IPU could also be addressed.

On particular areas of concern, and where the human rights of parliamentarians were called into question, there were broad expressions of support for valuable initiatives of the IPU such as the sending of fact-finding missions and other visits or public statements, all of which were to be encouraged.

The setting of future agendas of the IPU assemblies, aiming for instance for 2014, was suggested as a focus of attention for parliamentarians from our political family, to be included in the forthcoming discussions of this group. These could center perhaps on a single core issue as an overall topic, for example the current economic system, whose negative effects were undermining democracy and the best ideals of the IPU.

Those participating expressed enthusiasm about maintaining these informal meetings as a useful forum and on further developing the global network of social democratic and labour parliamentarians. It was agreed that in advance of the next meeting in conjunction with the IPU Assembly to take place in Quito in March 2013, the SI Secretariat would consult members with a view to identifying the issues for discussion.

In addition to this informal meeting in Québec City, a fruitful discussion on a range of issues relating to the work of the IPU and our own ambitions and contributions for preserving the ideals of the IPU, was also held by the SI Secretary General with the President of the IPU, Abdelwahed Radi.

Middle East

Violence must end

18 November 2012

The ongoing violence involving Gaza and Israel, with its toll on human life and civilian casualties is a source of great concern to the Socialist International.

The Israeli government and Hamas must both recognise their share of responsibility in this new round of violence which is not only causing further suffering, but is gravely endangering the precarious situation in the region and does not serve the interests of either.

In these difficult times, the Socialist International expresses its solidarity with the civilians in Gaza who are bearing the brunt of these hostilities and with the Israeli citizens who are suffering under threat from rocket attacks.

Both Israel and Palestine have a right to a secure state and to live in peace within recognised and mutually accepted borders.

These are the fundamentals for achieving peace. There is no other way forward for Israelis and Palestinians, and the events of recent days make peace ever more difficult and more distant. That is why the Hamas rockets must stop, and that is why the Israeli attacks must stop, including threats of a ground invasion which would only lead to more deaths among Israelis and Palestinians, greater suffering, and further humanitarian consequences.

The international community, including regional neighbours, must bring their influence to bear on the Israeli government and the Hamas leadership to recognise the urgent need for a ceasefire before the situation escalates into a larger conflict.

Indeed, in our view, the lack of a political horizon for peace, of a proper framework for negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians has exacerbated and entrenched the unresolved issues. The past three and a half years in particular have been wasted years in the search for peace. The world community must engage both sides, Israel and Palestine, with renewed vigour to settle this long-standing conflict.

The Socialist International will never cease in this endeavour.

Middle East

Socialist International welcomes UN vote on Palestinian status

30 November 2012

The Socialist International warmly welcomes the historic decision taken last night at the United Nations to grant Palestine non-member observer State status with an overwhelming 138 votes in favour, 9 against and 41 abstentions, and extends its sincere congratulations to President Mahmoud Abbas and the Palestinian people on this momentous achievement.

The world clearly wants and needs a negotiated, peaceful two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the SI fervently hopes that this decision will give fresh impetus to the process for peace and lead to an early resumption of dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians. We urge both sides to seize the moment and to engage seriously and quickly to build upon this historic step and make of it a catalyst for peace, for the sake of their own peoples, the region and the world.

The SI looks forward to the day when an independent Palestinian State will take its rightful place among the community of nations, living in peace alongside Israel, both within secure and mutually recognised borders.

Climate Change

Doha

12 December 2012



The United Nations Climate Change Conference, COP18/CMP8, which this year took place in Doha, Qatar, concluded last weekend. Negotiations were extended in an effort to reach a positive decision involving all parties; however, yet again, we have witnessed a COP sadly devoid of significant decisions on climate change, one of the most serious issues humankind currently faces.

This demonstrates once more the lack of political will to deal with this challenge. The refusal of some governments to prioritise climate change and its consequences exposes a vast inadequacy of effective global governance and a disregard of moral obligations. Without political will there is no political action.

Negotiations at last year's conference, the COP17/CMP7 summit in Durban, initiated the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action. This mandate was to underpin plans for a new, legally binding international agreement committing all countries to reduce greenhouse gasses, to be formalised by 2015 and take effect by 2020. It is imperative that this plan advances from the negotiating table to become a solid, effective and fully operational collective treaty, and extensive headway on this should have been seen in Doha. A work plan and timetable of meetings have been organised to take place during the next three years in order for a negotiating text to be ready by May 2015. Nevertheless it is deeply disappointing that a consensus was not achieved for an earlier completion date, considering the enormous urgency of the matter.

Despite opposition from some states, a second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol has been agreed, which will extend the agreement from 1 January 2013 to the end of 2020. However, it is not backed by some major nations and covers only 15 per cent of global emissions. The Protocol, which is currently the only binding climate change treaty in existence, provides a framework for obligations on emissions reductions and underlines the historical responsibility of developed countries to lead in this task. This is a necessity that was re-emphasised by many speakers at the conference, including United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

Developing nations, as we know, are not only vulnerable to the effects of climate change but are seriously affected by the emissions from other countries. They unfortunately lack the capacity and resources for mitigation and adaptation, and reported at the COP18 that finance had now become a make or break issue.

Finance was one of the crucial matters hindering progress at Doha. It is deeply worrying that no substantial commitments have yet been made by developed countries, despite their acknowledgment of responsibility. At the COP15 in Copenhagen in 2009, developed nations pledged a fund of US\$100bn annually by 2020, but there is no evidence in the outcome of Doha that this pledge will be fulfilled. Advances have been made since COP17 to the Green Climate Fund and some financial contributions have been pledged from several countries in order to ensure the Fund's operation. However, while it was agreed that a significant share of multilateral funding would flow through the Fund, without it the Fund will be redundant.

In the year since the last summit, environmental disasters such as hurricanes, flooding and droughts have occurred at an alarming rate and with growing force. In 2012 extreme flooding was witnessed across the globe, and most particularly in Africa and Asia. In September 2012, scientists reported that ice caps in the Arctic Sea had reduced to unprecedented levels. They projected that, within four years, these ice caps will melt completely during summer months, signifying a 'global disaster'. In October 2012, 'super-storm' Hurricane Sandy, the largest Atlantic hurricane on record, devastated parts of the Caribbean and the North-eastern United States, killing 253 people from seven of the countries it passed through. A 2012 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report suggests that hurricanes and cyclones of this magnitude will become more frequent and that it is very likely heat waves will increase.

These recent environmental events have had catastrophic effects on nations and no example carries more immediate impact than that of typhoon Bopha which tore through the Philippines while delegates argued unsuccessfully on issues at the COP18. In describing the destruction caused by the typhoon, the lead negotiator of the Philippines delegation made an emotional appeal to world leaders to face the stark reality, asking that 2012 be remembered as the year the world found the courage to find the will to take responsibility for the future we want. As he put it, "if not us, then who? If not now, then when? If not here, then where?"

Climate change cannot be ignored. From the displacement of people to severe food and water shortages, the damage is unfolding in front of us. An international treaty to substantially reduce emissions and provide mitigation and adaptation measures to help cope with the changing environment is a vital instrument to secure the survival of planet Earth.

Effective action to prevent the planet's temperature from increasing by more than 2°C, the target for

containing global warming as set out in the 2009 Copenhagen Accord, is long overdue. The pledges made in Doha to reduce emissions are inadequate for this aim and it is now overwhelmingly apparent that the 2°C goal may be unattainable. The proposed new treaty's projected timescale of 2020, or at best 2015, means that results of any new commitments may also materialise far too late. If we are unable to achieve the target of a 2°C limit, we are left with a completely uncertain future.

As the Socialist International has advocated, the key objective must be growth based on low-carbon technologies and efficient use of energy. Policies to confront the current financial crisis must be combined with policies that combat climate change. There is no choice between preserving the earth's environment and rejuvenating the global economy – the two tasks are fully interrelated and should be accomplished when taken together. It is essential that more funding is prioritised for research and innovation on new models to achieve sustainable development. This is a key step forward to fight climate change. As the SI underscored in its report "From a High Carbon Economy to a Low Carbon Society", we have the shared goal of reaching a low carbon society centered on climate justice. This is a matter for every country, as every country's survival depends upon it.

The world's biggest greenhouse gas-emitting countries must face up to their responsibilities. Issues of contention such as disparity between countries on levels of action, finances, and surplus credits should be dealt with swiftly. The Socialist International reiterates the need for a strong commitment from the international community to forge the political will necessary to combat climate change and come together now for action to secure a sustainable world.

Egypt

Egypt - The unfinished democratic agenda

21 December 2012

The Socialist International continues to closely follow developments in Egypt. Last weekend President Mohammed Morsi went ahead with the referendum on a new constitution for the country, despite strong disagreement from opposition parties and amid on-going street protests that have already seen several lives lost. This weekend will now see the conclusion of the vote.

Opposition groups had called on Morsi to postpone the referendum after strongly criticising the draft constitution. In the run-up to these events, a decree was issued in early December by President Morsi granting himself un-challengeable powers, which shocked both the Egyptian people and the international community. This was followed by his decision to rush the referendum on the contested new draft constitution and, although Morsi invited opposition parties to the table and promised to rescind his decree, his refusal to postpone the referendum was met with a rejection for dialogue. The SI has been deeply troubled by the fact that despite the lack of an accord, the vote went ahead without a proper process of consultation on such a fundamental matter.

The referendum's voting procedure resulted furthermore in reports of extensive irregularities, including a lack of impartial supervision, polls closing early and, in some instances, women reporting difficulties being allowed to cast votes. If, according to the interpretation given of the partial results so far, the constitution is narrowly accepted, the reports of irregularities along with the significantly low voter turnout recorded would indicate a referendum result that is far from genuinely representative of the will of the people.

The Socialist International therefore calls for serious efforts to be made to resume the path of dialogue to rescue the way forward for democracy at this significant juncture in Egyptian history. The new political foundations of the future Egypt must be democratic in their construction and ensure the rights and freedoms

of all people, regardless of religion, belief or gender. Any further loss of life or injury to those people defending their rights on the streets is totally unacceptable.

After the loss of more than 800 lives in the 2011 uprising, it is imperative not to forget what those brave Egyptians died for, or to lose momentum on consolidating the democratic advances. The Socialist International, which warmly welcomed the change brought about by the revolution, and which continues to stand by all those who are still striving for a fully democratic state, reiterates its solidarity with all those who share the ideals and principles of social democracy in Egypt today and all those who continue mobilised and engaged to defend the democratic goals of the revolution.

Mali

In support of peace and democracy in the Sahel region

16 January 2013

The Socialist International continues to be engaged in support of the efforts of its member parties in Mali, the ADEMA-PASJ of HE Dioncounda Traoré the interim President of Mali and the RPM led by Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, in defending the democratic institutions of the country, its territorial integrity and the security of its citizens.

At this difficult juncture for Mali, under threat from terrorist and rebel forces, the Socialist International has welcomed and fully supported the multilateral efforts to help the Malian government, including those of ECOWAS and the African Union, and Resolution 2085 adopted by the Security Council of the United Nations with regard to the establishment of an African-led international support mission in Mali (AFISMA). We recognise and commend the declared willingness and availability of countries from Africa to take the lead in response to the appeals to provide troops, as well as the swift assistance of the President of the Republic of France, HE François Hollande, and his government with the support of the members of the UN Security Council, in helping to secure the territory of Mali from occupation, disruption and violence.

Reports in relation to Mali from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on the increasing numbers of displaced people, and from the international medical humanitarian organisation Doctors Without Borders in regard to the wounded are of grave concern to our organisation.

While extending solidarity with all the peoples of the Sahel region, our International continues to stand firmly in support of the efforts of HE President Mahamadou Issoufou and our member party the PNDS of the neighbouring Republic of Niger, to consolidate the democratic institutions and to raise its people out of poverty. We stand equally in support of the efforts of our member party in Mauritania, the RFD, led by Ahmed Ould Daddah, who is currently engaged in moving forward demands for free and fair elections, to begin a new era for democracy in that country.

The Socialist International has been in touch with its member parties from the Sahel region in recent days and has undertaken to schedule a full discussion on these issues at the forthcoming Council meeting to take place in Cascais, Portugal on 4-5 February, as an emergency item. Our discussions will include exchanges on how best to effectively contribute to these international efforts, in support of peace and democracy in Mali as well as to security in the entire region.

Council

SI Council meeting in Portugal

4-5 February 2013



The Socialist International held its Council meeting in Cascais, Portugal, on Monday 4 – Tuesday 5 February, the first since the XXIV Congress that took place in Cape Town, South Africa, last September. The event was hosted by the SI member party in that country, the Portuguese Socialist Party.

Under the main heading “The World Economy: Our Vision for Growth, Jobs and Sustainable Development” the Council brought together close to 300 participants from 100 delegations, including leaders and representatives from SI member parties worldwide, as well as specially invited guests.

SI President George Papandreou made an introductory speech thanking the host party for their warm welcome and hospitality. Speaking on the main theme of the Council he emphasised that solidarity and dialogue was necessary, particularly in light of current global crises. He noted that a conservative Europe, one that is becoming introverted, fearful, nationalistic, will be a Europe doomed to failure; a progressive Europe is needed to eradicate the negative effects of conservatism and to overcome austerity. On worldwide issues he highlighted the relevance of the SI in today’s global challenges, adding that new policies are required ‘in a world with an entirely new global balance of power’.

In an opening statement António José Seguro, the host party’s leader and an SI Vice-President, welcomed participants, expressing his pleasure in hosting the event and bringing the SI family to Portugal. He said that the economic debate at the Council was crucial as it is so interrelated with the people. Socialism instills hope, ideals, ideas for peace, dignity and solidarity and a more developed world. The meeting of the Council, he continued, was designed to advance common ground on this debate, seeking to reinforce the priorities of the majority of our citizens. Recalling an African proverb, he described ‘When you want to go fast – go alone, when you want to go far – go in company.’ It is only this way, he concluded, that we can move forward, in solidarity, and by building a social fraternity that doesn’t leave anyone behind.

On the different aspects of the main theme: “The Eurozone Crisis: From here, which way forward?” and “Emerging and Developing Economies and Multilateral Institutions in an ‘Out of Crisis’ Strategy”, the Council heard different perspectives and views from representatives of SI member parties and guests from

continents and regions worldwide: from European parties both within and outside the Eurozone; from each country of the BRICS, including specially invited key-note speakers from the Indian National Congress Party and from China; from emerging economies and developing countries; and from the United States, Harvard Professor Richard Parker, Political Director of the Democratic National Committee.

A Declaration on the Global Economy was adopted that underscored the evaluations of the Council and which was based on five fundamental principles of the Socialist International. The first, solidarity, calling for a new international accord to ensure global trade is fair for all. The second, equality, requiring governments' global coordination for equality between, and among nations, across class, race, and gender, and to fairly distribute private wealth and reduce wage inequality in all countries. The third, a new internationalism, proposing the creation of a new global set of agreements, the restructuring of the WTO to recycle trading profits from severe wage differentials toward authentic global income security, and a new IMF and global currency regime built on the multilateral synthetic "bancor" system conceived by Keynes himself. The fourth, transparency, to ensure corruption is reduced, with new multilateral treaties on transfer pricing, uniform taxation and uniform laws on tax evasion, to reform private firms and establish new laws on international standards. The fifth, human and ecological balance, a concept interrelated with the economy, is called on to ensure equilibrium is achieved between what people need from the economy and the fundamental carrying capacity of the planet – crucial so that a new era, potentially of global prosperity and security, does not end in an Armageddon of global warming, resource wars, and obscene inequalities.

In light of recent events, two emergency items were added to the Council's agenda: "Mali: Supporting peace, security and democracy in the Sahel" and "Latest developments concerning the efforts of the people in the Arab World to advance the democratic agenda".

Supporting peace, security and democracy in the Sahel

In the discussions on Mali and the Sahel region, the Council heard a presentation by the leader of the RPM, Mali, Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, who had been a presidential candidate in the May 2012 elections that were suspended after the coup d'état in March. The goals now, Keita explained, were for national cohesion in Mali, to ensure free and fair elections, to build a state that can assume decisions, to assemble a national army, and for international cooperation in order to build security across the entire Sahel region. Ibrahima Ndiaye, First Vice-President of ADEMA-PASJ, the party of Malian interim President Dioncounda Traoré, also addressed the Council on the fragile situation in his country and his hopes for a strong democracy and for respect of the principles of the United Nations. Foreign Minister Mohamed Bazoum, PNDS, Niger, spoke on the Sahel region, also underlining the need for a new perspective in Mali to ensure the Malian people can make a free and fair choice and that stability is provided. He conveyed an invitation from HE President Issoufou to host a meeting of the SI Africa Committee in the coming weeks to discuss further the Sahel region. SI Vice-Presidents Ahmed Ould Daddah, President of the RFD, Mauritania, and Ousmane Tanor Dieng, First Secretary of PS, Senegal, also addressed the meeting on the situation in the Sahel region. Recognition was expressed for President Hollande of France, for the swift and concise action he took in Mali's time of crisis. A Declaration on the Sahel Region was subsequently unanimously adopted.

Latest developments concerning the Arab world

The Secretary General reported on his visit to Iraq following the SI Congress for talks with SI Vice-President Jalal Talabani on SI activities in the region and Talabani's offer to host meetings of both the SI Committee on the Arab World and the Committee on the Kurdish Question. These initiatives, however, were temporarily postponed due his illness. The Council expressed its solidarity with Jalal Talabani and extended to him the best wishes of the entire global political family for a speedy recovery.

On the second emergency item, the Arab world, the Council was addressed by leaders and representatives of SI member parties from that region, Mustapha Ben Jaafar, leader of Ettakatol, Tunisia and Nabil Shaath, from Fatah, Palestine. Among the invited guests was Hesham Youssef from the Arab League, Radhi Mohsen Al Mosawi, from Wa'ad Party of Bahrain, and Abdaziz Othman, from the Kurdish National Council of Syria.

Speakers highlighted that a new era had begun across the Arab World and that it was the role of socialists to work together to ensure the new constitutions resulting from the revolutions would be as democratic as possible. A Declaration on Developments Concerning the Arab World was adopted. In regard to Egypt, it called for greater transparency and political inclusion, and an end to brutality by security forces. On Syria,

the declaration reiterated the SI's support for an end to the fighting and for the right of the Syrian people to determine their own future. It called for international solidarity to achieve this and welcomed the funds that have been donated at the International Humanitarian Pledging Conference in Kuwait, January 30, 2013. On Bahrain, the SI reiterated its deep disappointment that the government had failed to implement the vast majority of reforms proposed by the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry, despite assurances to the contrary. The SI reiterated its call for these reforms, and for the release of Ibrahim Sharif, secretary general of the Wa'ad party and hundreds of prisoners of conscience. On Palestine, the declaration recognised the achievement of being admitted to the UN with Observer Status, and stated the SI's historic position supporting the Palestinian people's right to freedom, independence, unity and statehood, including their right to non-violent struggle for freedom and independence. On Western Sahara, the SI reiterated its full support for the right of self-determination of the Saharawi people as well as calling for the urgent resumption of direct negotiations between Morocco and Polisario Front under the auspices of the UN. Regarding Tunisia, the declaration recorded that the SI is closely following the process of the establishment of democratic institutions and the progress made towards the drafting of the constitution.

In a Resolution on Iran the SI strongly called for the Iranian government to respect the rights of political activists, noting the alarming numbers who have been executed, and also for the many Kurdish political prisoners that have been sentenced to death without proper legal representation. Grave concern was expressed over Iran's continued application of Article 188/1992 of the country's criminal code, which considers the members, supporters and followers of any Kurdish, Arab and Balouch political parties as "Mufsed fee Al Arz" (corrupted on earth), "Mohareb" (enemy of God), who must be punished by hanging and execution.

In a Statement on Puerto Rico the SI Council expressed its satisfaction and solidarity with the results of a status referendum on 6 November 2012. A clear majority of Puerto Ricans voted for a change to the country's territorial status. The SI reiterated its support for the rights of the people of Puerto Rico to free determination and to choose non-colonial alternatives recognised by international law. A further call was made for the release of Puerto Rican political prisoners, in particular, Oscar López Rivera who has been imprisoned in the US for 31 years.

The Council also adopted a Declaration on Zimbabwe. It congratulated parties to the Inclusive Government on agreeing a new constitution, urging them to implement the remaining reforms with particular emphasis on those relating to the media and security sector. The declaration also called for peaceful, credible and legitimate elections which guarantee the security of the person and the vote.

A report on the situation in Venezuela was presented to the Council by SI Vice-President Henry Ramos on behalf of the opposition *Mesa de Unidad Democrática* conveying concern over the institutional crisis in the country and calling for the constitution to be observed. An appeal was also made for the immediate release of political prisoners and for those in political exile to be allowed to return.

Establishment of the working organs of the International for the inter-congress period and campaigns to be launched

As this was the first Council meeting after the Congress, and in accordance with the statutes, its agenda included the establishment of the different organs of work of the Socialist International for the current period. These included special Commissions to examine and elaborate common policy recommendations and proposals on global issues on the international agenda, regional and thematic Committees, and Campaigns and Working Groups that focus on highlighting particular areas of global policy requiring new approaches and advancement on a common platform.

Secretary General Luis Ayala conducted the proceedings on this agenda item based on information received from member parties in advance of the meeting and the agreements reached by the Presidium on the eve of the Council.

Following the proposal of the Presidium, the Council agreed on the establishment of a high-level Commission on Equality, a central and relevant issue today, which is in need of new thinking in light of the current political, economic and global transformations taking place in a world where we are witnessing a widening gap between people.



The Council agreed on the establishment of regional Committees for Africa, the Arab World, Asia and the Pacific, the CIS the Caucasus and the Black Sea, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Mediterranean, the Middle East, and for South Eastern Europe. A Committee on the Kurdish Question and a Working Group on Syria, which were proposed at the Congress in Cape Town, were established by the Council.

The following thematic Committees and Working Groups were also established: Working Group on

Accountability and Transparency internationally, Committee on Democracy, Committee on Local Government, Committee on Poverty, Committee on Migrations, Working Group on Political Education, and a Working Group on Social Media. A new idea approved was that of adding a new category for individual membership of the Socialist International, as proposed in the report on SI reform, and a special working group on this subject was also agreed. Current membership is open to political parties and organisations and the working group will now look into how an additional relationship between individuals and the organisation can be defined.

In addition to these, the Council agreed to re-launch the campaign ‘Stop Violence Against Women’, on which the SI will work in close collaboration with its fraternal organisation, Socialist International Women.

The Secretary General reported on the candidates for membership of the two statutory committees, Ethics, and Finance and Administration. In keeping with the agreed reforms to ensure geographical representation, each Committee would have 3 members from Africa, 4 from the Americas, 4 from the European Union, 2 from non-EU Europe, and 2 from the Middle East, Asia, Pacific. From the regions where the number of candidates presented corresponded to the numbers to be elected, those were confirmed by the Council. In the case where there were more candidates than seats to be filled, it was agreed that the Secretary General would undertake consultations with a view to achieving an agreement. He reminded the Council that the chairs of those committees will be elected by the committee members at its first meeting.

Three further members of the Presidium were due to be elected following the last Congress, two of which should be women and one of which should represent a non-EU European country, as reported by Tero Shemeikka who headed the electoral commission at the Congress, ensuring that all regions were fairly represented and that the Statutes were complied with. For one of the women’s posts, the Council elected Colette Avital from Meretz, Israel. The post for the second woman Vice-President will be addressed at the next Council. For the position representing a non-EU European, the Council elected Edi Rama, leader of the SPA, Albania. In addition, three Honorary Presidents were elected to join the Presidium; these were Mustapha Ben Jaafar (Tunisia), Tarja Halonen (Finland) and Mahamadou Issoufou (Niger).

In regard to the membership applications deferred by the XXIV Congress, the following decisions were taken: Tanzania, CCM, was admitted as a full member and the following parties as consultative members: Algeria, FLN; Georgia, SDD; Sao Tomé and Príncipe, MLSTP-PSD; Swaziland, PUDEMO; Venezuela, UNT; Zambia, PF.

Before the conclusion of the meeting, the Council received the sad news of the passing of Reinaldo Gargano, President of the Socialist Party of Uruguay. The SI, the PSU and the Frente Amplio had lost a comrade dedicated to the cause of socialism in his country and in Latin America as a whole. The Council conveyed condolences to his family, friends and colleagues.

In closing, President Papandreu thanked the host party, reiterating to the people of Portugal the solidarity

of the Socialist International and its willingness to stand alongside them, as with others, in this period of financial difficulties and economic hardship.

DPRK

SI condemns DPRK nuclear test

12 February 2013

The Socialist International condemns unequivocally the nuclear test carried out this morning by North Korea and the subsequent threats of further tests. Coming just two months after their launching of a long-range rocket, this raises once again serious questions about Pyongyang's intentions and further destabilises peace and security in the region and in the world.

This defiant act by North Korea must be met with firm international condemnation, constituting as it does, a clear violation of the relevant UN Security Council resolutions. The SI welcomes the swift action by the UN in calling an emergency session of the Security Council on this matter. It is imperative that the North Korean regime understands the concerns of the entire international community, and further action must be taken immediately.

Beyond the security and political implications, the Socialist International also expresses its grave concern over the damage to the environment caused by such activity, and given the secrecy surrounding North Korea's nuclear programme, cannot accept Pyongyang's assertion that it "did not pose any negative impact on the surrounding ecological environment".

Venezuela

SI Secretary General, Luis Ayala, on democratic socialism at the UNT anniversary event in Venezuela

13 March 2013

To mark the 6th Anniversary of the party Un Nuevo Tiempo in Venezuela, and in their designated year for political education, the Secretary General of the Socialist International, Luis Ayala, delivered a talk on the history and ideological foundations of social democracy, and of the Socialist International as a political model, offering as well his best wishes to a Venezuela in transition.

Ayala began by congratulating and warmly welcoming Un Nuevo Tiempo at having recently joined the family of the Socialist International. He referred to the big challenges that lie ahead for Venezuela. He gave a special emphasis to the role of democratic socialism confronted with the model of Socialism in the 21st Century. He was unable to understand, he said, the warm welcome that the Venezuelan national government had extended to Lukashenko, the ruler of Belarus, which he described as dictatorial, stagnant and dangerous. He underlined that the only way to overcome poverty in Latin America was through an economy where money is not there just to produce more money but is at the service of the people, to produce employment and wellbeing.

He concluded that the new model Venezuela must now establish should be based on the progressive currents that are more democratic and modernising, and where the principles of freedom, social justice and

solidarity are placed at the same level. This is the model that will create equality and which will lead to the true path of democratic socialism.

Caracas, Venezuela, 15 March 2013

Africa

Supporting peace, democracy and solidarity in the Sahel

17-18 March 2013



Building on the discussions and decisions of the recent SI Council regarding the situation in the Sahel, a meeting of the Socialist International Africa Committee was held in Niamey, Niger, on 17-18 March, to focus on the crisis in Mali and its implications for the region and the

continent. Hosted by the SI member party in Niger, the Party for Democracy and Socialism of Niger, PNDS, it included a broad participation of leaders and representatives of many parties from the region and beyond.

The meeting opened with a large public session on 17 March with the presence of over two thousand people who were addressed first by the President of the PNDS and Foreign Minister of Niger, Mohamed Bazoum; then by the Secretary General of the Socialist International Luis Ayala; followed by Harlem Désir, leader of the PS France; and SI Vice-Presidents Nouzha Chekrouni from USFP Morocco, Ahmed Ould Daddah from RFD Mauritania, and Ousmane Tanor Dieng from PS Senegal.

The working sessions of the Committee took place on 18 March. This being the first meeting of the Committee after the last Congress, the agenda included the election of the Committee Chair and Vice-Chair to serve for the current inter-congress period. Following the democratic and transparent election procedure used for the first time at the past SI Congress for elections with multiple candidates, an electoral commission headed by SI Vice-President Nouzha Chekrouni, with Pedro Chaves from MPLA Angola and Kofi Attor from NDC Ghana as members, was appointed to organise and supervise the vote which was carried out by secret ballot. Emmanuel Golou, leader of the PSD of Benin was elected as Chair and Ebrahim Ebrahim, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs from the ANC of South Africa, was elected Vice-Chair.

In the debate on the Malian crisis, participants examined the underlying reasons for the crisis and the current challenges facing the region before addressing the options ahead for achieving peace and stability.

It was generally recognised that a number of factors had led to the outbreak of the crisis in January 2012 when armed rebel forces started occupying the north of the country. First, strategic errors had been made in dealing with past revolts, for instance when a national pact envisaged the creation of an army composed of armed rebels while retrieving the state army from the North, implicitly allowing terrorist groups to settle in that area. Second, the growing democratic deficit within the state structures led to a weakening of the democratic institutions paving the way for increased corruption, less accountability and fraudulent elections

as was the case in 2000 and 2007. The so-called Malian consensus which had been applied since 2002, whereby all political parties represented in the National Assembly were part of the government, created a vacuum within the democratic opposition and the much needed control over the government's actions. Furthermore, insufficient supervision of the decentralisation of power increased the vulnerability of local representatives to corruption and facilitated the entrenchment of drug trafficking.

Regarding the main challenges that needed to be addressed, some key elements were highlighted by participants. The military intervention taking place had to result in a full recovery of the territorial sovereignty for Mali and the UN forces mandate needed to be clearly defined in this regard. It was emphasised that good governance was the only foundation for peace and stability and had to be restored, and state institutions had to recover their strength and independence. Violence was a monopoly of the state and therefore the disarmament of rebel groups had to be undertaken while making sure that errors of the past were not repeated. The army had to be brought back to its initial purpose, not interfering in the political and social spheres, as there would be no legitimacy as long as the military was involved in the decision making. The recently founded National Commission for Reconciliation and Dialogue had to include representatives from all parts of society in order to be successful, without military presence or interference. Equal rights and freedoms for all ethnicities from all regions, irrespective of gender or religion, had to be ensured if the reconciliation process was to be a success.

A particular aspect which was widely stressed by different speakers was the question of elections and in which context they would take place. There was general consensus that the upcoming elections, tentatively scheduled for July, had to be free, transparent and democratic in order to lay the foundations for a strong, democratic state and the respect for the rule of law. A number of issues were seen as serious obstacles which had to be resolved in order to create the right environment for the elections. First, the presence of the military is a destabilising factor, as it is unlikely that they would abstain from interfering and accept a democratic vote, giving up the position of power they currently held. Second, the independence of the National Electoral Commission and other actors in the electoral process such as the judiciary and administration is not guaranteed, therefore casting serious doubt over the possibility of holding free and fair elections. Furthermore, there were technical problems like the updating of electoral lists which might not be accomplished before July. Third, the political class has failed to find an agreement on common objectives or to set up transitional institutions, thus allowing the military to maintain its position and at the same time weakening the democratic voices in Mali.

Participants unanimously agreed that the way out of the crisis had to lead to a transition to a democratic



Meeting with HE President Mahamadou Issoufou of Niger

state where freedoms and rights were respected. The international community had to give all its support but first and foremost the democratic forces in Mali had to work together to ensure that differences were overcome and that a democratic future was possible. The Committee urged the two member parties of the International in that country,

ADEMA-PASJ and the RPM, to unite their forces in order to become a leading reference in the transition

phase. The Committee further decided to set up a working group on Mali to closely follow developments and make recommendations for the tasks ahead to ensure that democracy would once again prevail in this country.

Following these discussions, the Committee adopted a Declaration reflecting the outcome of the debates and reaffirming its solidarity with the people of Mali and the Sahel and its support for its two member parties in Mali.

The activities of the Committee in Niamey concluded with a meeting of the participating SI Presidium members and the heads of delegations with the President of the Republic of Niger, HE President Mahamadou Issoufou, at the Presidential Palace. The President was informed of the discussions and decisions of the meeting which he welcomed, underlining the importance of the SI's commitment and support in regard to Mali and the issue of security in the whole Sahel region. He gave an overview of his plans and objectives for his country and the progress made in terms of democracy, infrastructure, accountability and the economy. He stressed the aim of making the democratic gains irreversible and was proud to cite as an example, that in regard to freedom of the press in Niger, under his government it had moved in the world ranking from 104th place to 29th. He highlighted that in all these endeavours, no country could go it alone and he placed great importance on the value of regional cooperation and integration which he was working towards.

The Committee also adopted a Motion of thanks in which it expressed its gratitude to the PNDS and the people of Niger for their warm and fraternal welcome, and particular appreciation for President Mahamadou Issoufou.

THE NIAMEY DECLARATION

Original: French

The meeting of the Socialist International Africa Committee on the theme: "Supporting peace, democracy and security in the Sahel" was held in Niamey on 17th and 18th March 2013 under the chairmanship of its newly elected Chair Emmanuel Golou, in the presence of the Secretary General of the Socialist International Luis Ayala, and assembled leaders and representatives of many socialist parties from Africa and Europe.

The Niamey meeting is taking place in a particularly difficult context characterised by war in Mali. In that regard, the participants commended the courageous decision of President Francois Hollande to send the French army into Mali in order to put an end to the invasion of the country by terrorists. The participants also paid tribute to the regional leadership of President Mahamadou Issoufou on this issue.

The SI Africa Committee reaffirmed its solidarity with the Malian people, as well as its commitment to the territorial integrity and national unity of the country, and underscored its condemnation of terrorism in all its forms.

The Committee observed that the occupation of northern Mali by armed groups is the consequence of the breakdown of the Malian state's authority, whose causes are numerous and complex.

The failure of the Malian state results from bad political, administrative and economic governance as well as the emergence of many hostile armed actors.

The installation of AQMI in the north of Mali was instrumental to the development of violence and the 'crime economy' in the sub region. The Libyan conflict has also been an aggravating factor of the crisis with consequences affecting the whole of Western Africa and the Maghreb. Drug trafficking and terrorism have become a major threat to the security of all the states in the region.

Furthermore, the SI Africa Committee is concerned at the human rights violations suffered by the populations of northern Mali, the risk of deterioration of civil peace and the continued displacement of populations. It condemns the new forms of violence against women and girls.

The Committee is equally concerned at the role that the military junta continues to play, taking hostage the state and political actors in Mali.

The Committee expresses its satisfaction at:

- The efforts of the international community for a speedy settlement of the crisis in Mali, notably through the adoption of Resolution 2085,
- The military intervention of France, AFISMA and Chad that foiled the attempt of drug traffickers to destroy the foundation of the Malian state,
- The will of the United Nations to turn AFISMA into a UN peacekeeping force that will enable other countries that are not ECOWAS members to contribute to the efforts to stabilise the situation.

The Socialist International Africa Committee commends:

- The announcement by the transitional government of Mali of the establishment of a National Commission for Dialogue and Reconciliation. The historic and deep-rooted social ties between the communities of northern Mali serve as a basis for a speedy restoration of peace and trust,
- The will of the Malian authorities to hold elections by the end of July 2013 that will enable the installation legitimate authorities.

The Socialist International Africa Committee:

- Encourages the Malian government to create favourable conditions for an inclusive dialogue avoiding past mistakes,
- Strongly recommends the holding of free, fair and credible elections as quickly as possible with appropriate support from the UN peace keeping mission in Mali.
- Calls on the international community to take measures necessary to ensure that the military junta does not hinder the process of national reconciliation or the organisation of elections,
- Expresses its solidarity with the peoples of Mali and the Sahel during this challenging time,
- Reiterates its support for the Malian member parties of the Socialist International, namely the RPM and ADEMA, and urges them to create the conditions whereby the Malian political class will be able to reach a consensus during the transition.
- Reaffirms the willingness of the Socialist International to accompany and support the efforts in Mali for a speedy resolution of the situation and to that end decides to set up a working group to monitor the situation through appropriate initiatives.

IPU

SI at 128th Assembly of Inter-Parliamentary Union in Quito, Ecuador

24 March 2013



On the occasion of the 128th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) held in Quito, Ecuador, from 22 to 27 March 2013, the Socialist International organised its regular meeting of parliamentarians from the SI political family attending the IPU Assembly, on 24 March.

Present at the meeting were parliamentarians from Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Belgium, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Burkina

Faso, Canada, Dominican Republic, France, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Haiti, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Namibia, Nicaragua, Niger, Palestine, Poland, Portugal, South Africa, San Marino, São Tome e Principe, Serbia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tanzania, Turkey, United Kingdom and Zambia. The meeting was chaired by the SI Secretary General.

The discussions included an update on matters raised at the previous meeting in Quebec, exchanges on issues on the global agenda of our International, reviews of some national situations, brief reports on different areas of work by the IPU and recommendations for its future meetings.

The members from Mongolia informed participants that since the last meeting in Quebec, when it was reported that the SI member party, the MPP, was being denied the right to a parliamentary caucus, the situation had changed, their caucus was now functioning as it should, and they were very grateful to the Socialist International for its action and support in achieving this. The participants from Turkey reported that the situation raised at the previous meeting affecting the parliamentarians who were under detention remained very serious, as they, along with a number of intellectuals and journalists unfairly accused of planning to bring down the government, were facing life-time imprisonment. The judicial process was expected to conclude in the coming months, and they appealed for international attention on this case to be maintained. It was also reported that the situation of the imprisoned parliamentarians from Palestine which had been addressed at the last meeting continued unchanged and the Palestinian delegates, while recalling that there were at the same time many political prisoners other than parliamentarians, were grateful for the continued support and solidarity.

Addressing the impact of the financial crisis, the SI Secretary General updated participants on the discussions and decisions of the recent Council meeting held in Portugal. Participants from Portugal, Spain, Turkey, Canada, Poland, Sweden and France contributed with reports on developments in their countries and on the economic policies, efforts and views of their respective parties in confronting the present economic situation.

The crisis in Mali, which was highlighted at the previous IPU Assembly, was also a subject of attention. The SI Secretary General reported on the recent meeting of the SI Africa Committee in Niger which had focused on current developments in the Sahel region. The discussions in Quito included a report by the vice-chair of the commission for foreign affairs, defence and the armed forces of the National Assembly of France, who highlighted the broad international support for the action taken by her country in response to the request by the President of Mali, and the logistical support provided by the UK and the USA. The emphasis was now on training local forces to facilitate an early withdrawal and handover to African and

UN bodies. The main concern for all participants was the need to secure the territorial integrity and national sovereignty of Mali and provide the conditions for holding free and fair democratic elections as planned.

In reports on national situations, the meeting heard about developments in Haiti where there was a deficit of real democracy and repeated interference in the electoral process, including corruption. Added to this was the harsh reality of chronic poverty and the continuing difficulties resulting from the slow recovery from the earthquake, partly as the consequence of insufficient commitment by the international community. Regarding Turkey, the parliamentarians participating reported on their concern over the direction and authoritarian tendencies of the present government. As regards Morocco, it was reported that the new government, although democratically elected, was showing signs of incorporating religion in affairs of the state and it was feared that many democratic and social gains made in recent years were being eroded, notably concerning the role and level of participation of women in politics, which had already been significantly reduced. The meeting also received information on the situation of Ghana where successive democratic elections had been held without difficulties, despite a recent legal challenge by the opposition. The last elections had been widely monitored by international observers and declared as free and fair.

Reports regarding different areas of work within the IPU were addressed by several participants involved in those activities, including human rights, climate change, coordination of action between the IPU and the United Nations, and on the Middle East.

On the subject of strengthening the political dimension of the work within the IPU, the participants were of the view that it would be a positive development to advance on the coordination of positions on different items on the agenda of the IPU assemblies, and in particular on the emergency items which sometimes not all were sufficiently prepared for. It was proposed that a process of consultations should be undertaken in advance of the vote in the plenary, thus providing an opportunity for members to exchange opinions before casting their votes.

In summing up the discussions, the SI Secretary General took note of and appreciated the willingness of participants to contribute to our common purposes in strengthening the IPU and our shared social democratic ideals through our meetings at these assemblies. Before concluding, he reported on the positive exchange of correspondence with the Secretary General of the IPU, Anders Johnsson, and the very constructive personal talks he had held prior to this meeting with IPU President Abdelwahed Radi.

The Kurdish People

SI Committee on Kurdish People in Sulaimaniya

12 April 2013



The SI Committee on the Kurdish People, established by the Council following a decision by the Congress, held its first meeting in Sulaimaniya, on Friday 12 April 2013. It was hosted by the SI member Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, PUK, and brought together participants from more than twenty Kurdish political parties and organisations from Iraq, Iran, Turkey and Syria.

Hama Omer

At the opening of the meeting, the SI Secretary General Luis Ayala paid tribute to HE Jalal Talabani, President of Iraq, PUK leader and an SI Vice-President, with whom he had discussed the holding of this meeting. Talabani's absence was strongly felt and during the discussions participants joined Ayala in wishing President Talabani a speedy recovery.

Luis Ayala went on to express satisfaction that this Committee was now a reality. The politics and agendas of the various Kurdish parties throughout the region were varied, he said, but the cause was the same: rights, freedoms, democracy, and solidarity. Human rights could not be trampled on and they needed to be for all, not just for some. He underlined the firm commitment of the Socialist International in this regard. Commenting on the wave of change underway in the Middle East, he said this was the time for politics and dialogue. Kurds in Iraq had come a long way in gaining rights and freedoms for their people since the fall of Saddam Hussein ten years before, but important issues remained. Intimidation by Baghdad over Kirkuk was unacceptable, Article 140 of the constitution needed to be implemented and democracy needed to be respected. He referred to the grave situation in Syria and looked forward to hearing first hand from our Kurdish friends there on recent developments, and from our members from the BDP on the latest initiatives in Turkey, an issue at the center of concerns of Kurdish people everywhere. The situation in Iran regarding the Kurdish population could not be more urgent today than it has been for years and he hoped that headway could be made there soon. He reiterated that they could count on the solidarity of the Socialist International and its members worldwide.

Mala Bakhtiar, Head of the Political Bureau of the PUK, warmly welcomed all participants on behalf of his party. He hailed this initiative of the Socialist International and expressed thanks to the Secretary General. Until now, he said, Kurds in the Middle East have been voiceless, divided and friendless. With this new Committee he hoped it would bring people together and provide a sanctuary for their cause. After a long struggle the PUK had gained full membership in the SI and he wished the same for other Kurdish parties. There were many changes in the Middle East, Bakhtiar said, and many people struggling for a better life. The time was over for governments to dictate to the people and democracy was now moving forward in the region. Resolving the cause of the Kurdish people in all four parts of Kurdistan was key to achieving peace and democracy in the Middle East, he said, and the role of the Socialist International would be crucial in bringing a greater understanding of this issue to all corners of the world. He was pleased that with this new Committee there was a platform for setting a strategy among the Kurdish political parties. He hoped in the future other parties of Kurdistan will also convene in peace and freedom.

In open and frank discussions, all the parties present took part in the debates, describing their respective positions and viewpoints. All participants enthusiastically welcomed the convening of this meeting, calling it a historic moment. There were strong expressions of recognition and gratitude to the SI for its long record in supporting the Kurdish cause and for this re-launching of its commitment to achieving justice for the Kurdish people and moving forward their agenda for rights and freedoms. The Committee should be an open forum, bringing together Kurdish parties committed to the achievement of those goals in a democratic framework. It was stressed that all Kurdish parties needed to be supportive of each other and should meet more often. The changing environment in the Middle East and the many crises in existence required that the Kurds be united and have a common strategy. This committee was seen a welcome first step in that direction.

In regard to **Iraq**, on the 10th anniversary of the liberation of the Kurdish people from Saddam Hussein's dictatorial regime, it was noted that although there was democracy, peace and stability in the Kurdish region, problems with the national government remained. There was the status of the province of Kirkuk, which was administratively under the control of Baghdad, there was the outstanding problem of the lack of implementation of Article 140 of the constitution which affected Kirkuk and was a violation of the rights of the Kurdish people; there were matters relating to the national budget, issues with the parliament in Baghdad, and the increasing danger of sectarianism and terrorism. The situation of Kirkuk was of particular concern, where Baghdad's build-up of military presence on the borders was seen as attempts at intimidation and increasing control. It was pointed out that the Governing Council of Kirkuk was the same as it had been since 2005, as Baghdad has consistently refused to allow new elections. The SI Secretary General, in a statement to the press after the meeting, underlined that nothing less than the withdrawal of troops, the proper implementation of Article 140 of the constitution and the holding of free and fair elections was acceptable.

Participants from the Kurdish parties from **Iran** reported that the repression and suffering of the Kurdish population in that country continues. The obligation of the international community to keep up the pressure for recognising their rights without delay was underlined and it was hoped that through this SI Committee, international public awareness could be focused on their plight. The parties there were encouraged to intensify their cooperation with each other and work together in unity, and in this sense there was a particular appeal to the PDKI and the KDP who participate in the work of the SI.

The Committee heard from the BDP of **Turkey** that the new process underway with the Turkish government was seen as a chance for finding a peaceful solution. It was still in its early stages, but there was cause for optimism and they were looking forward to drawing up a new legal framework for the Kurds. They wanted democratic autonomy, maintaining good relations with other parts of Kurdistan. The importance of support from the international community for the success of these talks was underlined, as they were seen as crucial for the whole region. A signal from the international community to the Turkish government in support of the peace process was considered useful.

The situation of the Kurds in **Syria** had reached a unique phase and they were today fighting alongside the rebels, against the Assad regime. The Kurdish participants from Syria reported that they were working together, and for the first time they have areas secured under their control. They were seeking a federal system within Syria and asked for backing and help in this endeavour. There was concern expressed about what type of regime would replace that of Assad, particularly if it would be a fundamentalist one. The US and Europe were perceived as not acting decisively enough in helping the opposition to bring an end to the Assad regime for the same reason. They appealed to the SI for global support in keeping up international pressure on the opposition to recognise now the rights of the Kurds in Syria. It was considered important not to let happen in Syria what had happened in Iraq, in that everyone let the regime fall first and left the Kurdish issue to be sorted out later.

With the changes sweeping across the Middle East in the ‘Arab Spring’, the Kurdish populations were also mobilised to gain their rights and freedoms. Rather than armed conflict, theirs should be a civil struggle, and dialogue for peace should never cease. Another area of importance that was included in the discussions was the role of women. Political parties and institutions of the Kurdish people should increase their representation of women, as our political family was committed to gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Following the decision by the SI Council that committees would elect their own chairs and vice-chairs, and after consultations among the Kurdish member parties of the SI, a proposal was put forward. Mala Bakhtiar from the PUK was elected as **Chair of the Committee**, with Nazmi Gur from the BDP Turkey and Loghman Ahmedi from the PDKI Iran as **Vice-chairs**, understanding that a process is open between the PDKI and the KDP of Iran for increased cooperation and unity.

It was confirmed that the SI Committee on the Kurdish People should constitute a platform for the Kurdish members of the SI along with other invited parties, like on this occasion, which included guest parties represented in the Kurdistan Parliament-Iraq and other parties following consultations, and in agreement with the hosts. The Committee will meet periodically and report regularly to the Council of the SI, working within the structures of the Socialist International and in accordance with its policies.



The meeting also agreed that the Socialist International would organise an international conference on the Kurdish people late in the year, at the headquarters of one of the international institutions with which the SI cooperates and has a recognised status.

In the days immediately prior to these discussions in Sulaimaniya, the SI Secretary General held a series of meetings. These included with the Head of the Political Bureau of the SI member PUK, Mala Bakhtiar; the President of the Iraqi Kurdish Parliament, Arsalan Baiz; the Governor of Kirkuk,

Najmaddin Karim; and the General Secretary of the Ministry of Peshmerga and Spokesman for the General Command of the KRG, Jabar Yawar Manda. The SI Secretary General also held a special meeting with HE Massoud Barzani, President of the Kurdistan Regional Government and leader of the KDP Iraq, on the current situation in the region and relations with the national government in Baghdad.



Renewed call for global crackdown on tax evasion and tax havens

15 April 2013

The Socialist International (SI) has repeatedly called for international regulation to prevent tax evasion, which is robbing our economies of trillions of dollars every year. The recent media investigation of this phenomenon comes as a resounding confirmation of our position.

In 2008, the SI created a Commission on the Global Financial Crisis, which highlighted the lack of effective international regulation and implementation mechanisms to stem tax avoidance and tax evasion.

Bank secrecy, offshore centres and tax havens rob national economies of capital vital to social welfare and sustainable growth. This escalating problem has greatly contributed to the increase of inequality in our societies, with global wealth now concentrated in the hands of a tiny minority. This has undermined democratic institutions, as politics are captured by powerful economic lobbies. Countries facing drastic fiscal consolidation are further punished as the burden of adjustment falls squarely and unjustly on the weakest and most vulnerable groups, who cannot avoid paying their taxes.

The SI demands immediate action from international institutions, including the UN and the G20, to create a regulatory framework that will put an end to tax evasion. This framework should include incentives and rules that support effective action against tax havens and ensure more effective oversight of Credit Rating Agencies and derivative markets.

The SI Commission on the Global Financial Crisis has proposed the creation of a World Finance Organization that will set global standards, globalize enforcement, and eradicate tax havens.

We also need to consolidate and coordinate the adoption of innovative tools, such as a global Financial Transaction Tax. Such a tax would improve the transparency of financial markets, whilst ensuring a fair share of the burden and fair distribution of global resources. It would create new tax revenues, to replace the traditional taxation of capital and equity, which has been undermined by badly regulated globalization.

We welcome the fact that the SI Commission's proposals have already been adopted by the the European Parliament, the European Commission, and by Argentina, Brazil, and South Africa. We support the French President's, Francois Hollande, call for the fight against tax evasion. The President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, has just announced that this issue will be on the European Council's Agenda in May. However, the European Council has paid lip service to this issue in the past so the SI now expects decisive action, not simply statements of good intent.

The G20 should also take bolder action to push for the implementation of effective actions against tax havens. The G20 has already called on all jurisdictions to adhere to international standards of tax transparency and agreed action against those countries that do not meet these criteria. But we are still lacking real action and demonstrable results.

The international community's challenge in the 21st century is to align a globalised economy with the values and principles of a democratic and fair society. Our global governance system has a responsibility to tackle inequality and ensure sustainable growth for all, and a crackdown on global tax evasion is a critical step to this end.

George Papandreou
President of the Socialist International

Venezuela

Recount of votes crucial to ensure the election's legitimacy, democracy and peace

15 April 2013

The Socialist International, which has member parties in Venezuela and whose activities also include the participation of other like-minded organisations in that country, has followed with great attention for several years now, the evolution of political life in Venezuela and has observed in situ various electoral processes there over the years.

Among the international observers officially accredited for the presidential elections carried out yesterday, 14 April, were those from the Socialist International.

The elections, according to the figures announced by the National Electoral Council (CNE), led to a very close result between the two principal candidates, Nicolás Maduro of the PSUV with 7,505,338 votes or 50.66% and Henrique Capriles of the Mesa de Unidad with 7,270,403 votes or 49.07%, a situation which led one of the officials of the Council to call for a recount and a civilian audit of all the votes cast. Equally, the candidate of the MUD, H. Capriles, publicly called for an investigation and clarification of approximately 200 incidents and registered irregularities before the beginning of the process, as well as of more than 3200 electoral incidents, denouncements and violations during the course of the elections which would have affected a free and fair vote.

It is therefore an urgent and crucial requirement today, in order to ensure the legitimacy of the electoral process, democracy and peace in Venezuela, that the National Electoral Council proceed to initiate a credible recount as soon as possible of one hundred percent of the votes cast, which would allow the establishment with total certainty and transparency of the definitive results of these elections, and we call on the electoral authorities in Venezuela to refrain from proclaiming a candidate-elect until the conclusion of this process.

Cape Verde

PAICV XIII Congress

19-21 April 2013



Socialist International Secretary General, Luis Ayala, attends the XIII Congress of the African Party of Cape Verde's Independence, PAICV.

Moldova

The Socialist International is deeply concerned over recent legislation in Moldova

7 May 2013

The Socialist International is deeply concerned by legislation passed by the Moldovan Parliament last week, which compromises the integrity and the character of fundamental democratic institutions of the Moldovan State.

Indeed, the International has been following political life in Moldova closely over recent years with a keen interest in seeing Moldova joining Europe, developing a new legitimate institutional framework, and consolidating past gains borne from the will of the Moldovan citizens for a fair and democratic society.

The set of laws passed on Friday May 3, extending the powers of Moldova's current interim government, granting Parliament the power to remove constitutional judges, and raising the threshold for political parties to gain representation in Parliament, affects the constitutional and political framework of Moldovan democracy, harms the integrity of its institutions and seriously undermines multi-party democracy.

It is imperative that Moldova resume an open dialogue between its political actors to regain a credible and legitimate path for a consensus on the way forward on such crucial matters for the future of the State of Moldova.

Moldova's citizens have battled in the past for opening up the way for real and democratic change and today everyone has to act with consistency and commitment to fulfil these aspirations. Nothing less than an open, fair and legitimate system of government will do for Moldova and its people.

Guatemala

UNE General Assembly

12 May 2013



The Socialist International attends the Congress of the National Union for Hope, UNE.

The CIS, the Caucasus and the Black Sea

Meeting of the Socialist International Committee for the CIS, Caucasus and Black Sea, Tbilisi, Georgia

3-4 June 2013



Socialist International member parties from the CIS, Caucasus and Black Sea region gathered in Tbilisi on 3-4 June 2013, to discuss current priorities and challenges to social democracy in the region and ways to overcome conflicts, a fundamental need to achieve fair and prosperous societies. The meeting was hosted by the SI member party in Georgia, the Social Democrats for Development, SDD.

At the opening of the meeting, the SI Secretary General affirmed that social democracy was present in all countries of the region, even where the most challenging situations existed, and that it was the way forward for people in their struggles for democratic governance, conflict resolution, and fair social and economic progress. He underlined the SI's satisfaction at formally meeting in Georgia, the very first country to have

had a social democratic government, which came to office in 1918 following the country's declaration of independence. There were many issues to solve in this region and our political family stood ready to meet those challenges together, based on truth, real democracy and solidarity.

Gia Jorjoliani, leader of the SDD, thanked all the participants for their presence and welcomed the opportunity to discuss the problems of the region. They were soon to celebrate the 95th anniversary of the social democrats' first taking office in Georgia, and today they looked forward to further developing social democracy, aware of the new opportunities that had emerged from the 2008 financial crisis, which was in effect a crisis of neo-liberalism. A new phase had begun, and the Georgian social democrats were seeking a new approach, an alternative to the politics of austerity and experimental management of the country without democracy. It was clear to them that politics without the social dimension could not lead to genuine democracy.

Social democratic priorities

The discussions of the Committee, co-chaired by Vahan Hovhannesian of the ARF-D of Armenia and Alexandra Dobolyi from the MSzP of Hungary, with Committee vice-chair Oleg Tulea of the PDM of Moldova, concentrated first on an examination of the current challenges faced in the different countries of the region. During these discussions, it was observed that in the two decades since the fall of the Soviet Union, many countries had not been able to progress from 'irresponsible order and totalitarian societies', with their governments focusing on the free market as the solution to everything. It was therefore necessary to break the domination of oligarchic regimes and to push forward social policies, healthcare, education for all, equal opportunity, and greater citizen participation.

It was highlighted that there were many people, parties, organisations and movements throughout the region that shared social democratic principles, therefore the first task should be to harness those forces and inspire people to support these policies, given that there was a tendency for people to vote for the ruling party when feeling most vulnerable, or to turn to nationalism or religious extremism. As the neo-liberal ideology was so deeply rooted among the elites, new efforts had to be made to explain the content of social democracy and to make our voices heard. Despite the differences in the various countries, which included coalition governments or shared platforms, it was observed that all faced a common challenge in neo-liberalism. There were also cases of good practices, such as that of Moldova whose experience could be shared, and others which illustrated that democracy, once arrived at, constantly needed defending, updating, and consolidating.

Overcoming conflict

On the subject of peace and overcoming conflict, it was noted that one of the most serious obstacles to achieving fair and prosperous societies in the region was that of territorial conflicts. In Georgia there were two, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which, it was reported, were ethnic conflicts but had been manipulated by the former nationalist, ultra-right regime to create the concept of an internal enemy in order to legitimise their hold on power and divert attention from the problems of democratic governance, the demands for human rights, a fair economy, and social welfare. The legacy of the Soviet system, where people were observing, not participating, and had no reason to cooperate and unite for common goals, along with the hegemonic ideology of neo-liberalism that followed, contributed to the 'isolation and atomisation' of society, to a lack of common purpose and to a deepening of differences. The question today was how to manage the borders within the present moratorium and how to achieve the common goal of social and economic development. There was a new, progressive approach: that cooperation on agriculture, development and a social-oriented system could constitute a way out for these conflicts. In the context of other regional conflicts in general, it was observed that this approach was a good one providing there was dialogue and no one side was seeking ultimate unconditional victory. Regarding Nagorno-Karabagh, it was stated that the positions remained entrenched and that the key task there was to continue promoting and building opportunities for direct dialogue, as the SI had previously done between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

The Socialist International is known as an organisation of people who reach out to each other for understanding and dialogue, as had been seen in relation to other conflicts. It was proposed, and agreed by the Committee, to identify political actors or like-minded people in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, in order to undertake an SI initiative to engage them in common discussions.

Throughout the Committee's debates was the common thread of international Solidarity, perceived as the core of our social democratic identity. Faced with the challenge, in parts of the region, of savage capitalism and neo-liberalism on the one hand, and radicalism on the other, it was emphasised that cross-border cooperation and transnational solidarity must be intensified and preserved.

National situations

Participants at the meeting also presented brief reports on their national situations, sharing with others the current realities in their respective countries. The Committee heard with concern about the latest developments in **Turkey** where citizens, exercising their right to free assembly, had been victims of police brutality and increasing authoritarianism, and where the CHP, an SI member, continued in its struggle for rights, freedoms, democracy and social justice.

In the case of **Georgia**, participants learned of the process of transformation underway in the country and the steps taken by the government, which counts with the support of the SI member SDD, towards the achievement of universal education and healthcare, poverty reduction, and the development of village and labour relations.

In the **Ukraine**, it was reported that the regime of Yanukovich was showing signs of returning to authoritarianism, and the Committee expressed its support for the efforts of the people fighting for justice. It was noted that in **Belarus** social democrats still struggled to make their voices heard, but they continued to fight for rights, freedoms and democracy. It was reported that the situation of the imprisoned opposition BSDP (NH) leader, Mikalai Statkevich, had worsened, and the Committee, in its final Declaration, called for an end to the persecution of all opposition leaders and for their liberation and rehabilitation. In the case of **Kazakhstan**, a society characterised by inequality, division, control of the mass media and a lack of other freedoms, the SI member OSDP continued in its efforts to promote social democracy and the country's political modernisation. Concerning **Azerbaijan**, the Committee was informed that the SDPA would be putting forward their own candidates in the next elections. It was reported that President Aliyev was implementing a series of social policies, however it did not have an ideological base. In the final Declaration of the meeting, the Committee members expressed support for the re-establishment of the SDPA's status in the SI.

As regards **Moldova**, considering the former situation where the authoritarian communist regime had been in control and there existed no culture of dialogue, the PDM had worked for a coalition, giving new hope to the country and its citizens, and bringing Moldova closer to its European neighbours. Gratitude was expressed to the SI for the constant support it had received during this process. In the case of **Armenia**, it was noted that there were not the classic issues between left and right, as there was a shared platform with common principles in the coalition government. Within that framework, however, the ARF-D, continued to promote social democratic ideals in the interests of the people. In **Hungary**, although part of the EU, the SI-member MSZP continued to work to defend citizen's rights and democracy. It was reported that the Party was preparing for elections in 2014, which they had the chance to win, although amongst other things they were facing changes to legislation affecting party financing. The Committee also heard a report on the current situation in **Greece**, where the economic crisis had taken a heavy toll on society, and on a humanitarian level, and where the consequent danger of a resurgence in political extremism existed.

Future initiatives

Looking ahead at the Committee's future programme of work, it was agreed to pursue a number of initiatives, including a visit to Belarus, a meeting in Ukraine, a mission to Tajikistan in connection with the next elections, to continue building on the SI's previous work in regard to Nagorno-Karabagh and on relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and to search for an opportunity for dialogue involving South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

At the conclusion of the debates, the Committee adopted a Declaration of the meeting.

DECLARATION

The Socialist International member parties from the CIS, Caucasus and Black Sea, gathering in Tbilisi on 3-4 June 2013 to define priorities and challenges to social democracy in the region, reaffirmed, in the first instance, their unwavering commitment to preserving the unity and integrity of this global political family following recent initiatives by our members in Germany and their statements which appeared in the press. The members of the Committee take this opportunity to declare themselves fully represented by the contents of the Open Letter issued by the President and Secretary General of the Socialist International in response to those developments.

We underline that international Solidarity, the core of our social democratic identity, must be preserved and strengthened. The countries of this region, although different socially and culturally, and which are presently at varying stages on the road to securing, improving or consolidating democracy, nevertheless share many common problems. Coordinated action at regional level is crucial, and we are committed to redoubling efforts in pursuit of democratic governance, solidarity and equal rights for all.

The Committee noted, in the case of Georgia, that there is a sensitive process of transformation underway after the changing of government by elections, and it is hoped that the process of the restoration of justice will be transparent and effective. We hope that the political system will become more representative and democratic. Steps taken towards the achievement of universal education and healthcare, for poverty reduction, for the development of the village and labour relations in Georgia are welcome.

We also welcome the politics of the Georgian government devoted to peaceful and democratic development in the region, and its efforts for the advancement of Georgia-Russian relations in a civilised framework.

Peaceful politics in the region and among the neighbours is of paramount importance, and only the peaceful resolution of conflicts in the region must prevail.

The Committee fully supports the peaceful resolution of the regional conflicts based on the principles of international law.

The Committee expresses deep concern over disproportionate and excessive use of force by the police against citizens exercising their right to free assembly in Turkey. We would like to remind the Turkish government that freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, and the right to have peaceful protests are fundamentals of a democratic regime. We observe with great concern the rise of authoritarian inclinations in Turkey, and the ensuing apathy towards citizens' legitimate grievances. We call upon the Government to show constraint and respect human rights and freedoms. The Committee offers condolences for those who lost their lives during the protests and wishes a speedy recovery for the injured. The SI will continue to be in solidarity with the Turkish people and the Republican Peoples' Party, CHP, in their struggle for rights and freedoms, democracy, and social justice.

In Ukraine, the political process has shown that attempts by Victor Yanukovich to return to authoritarianism have no place and no support in society. At the same time, right-wing opposition is unable to propose a credible alternative to his course and is increasingly losing popularity among the people. Because the main forces both in power and opposition in fact are isolated not only from the reality of the people but also from the fight for democracy and fairness, they are becoming isolated in politics. Just as the SI was the first organisation to support the struggle of the Ukrainian people for freedom in 2004, it now supports the efforts of Ukrainian citizens fighting for justice against oligarchic groups from both ruling political sides.

The Committee reiterated its full solidarity with the people of Belarus in their struggle for freedom, democracy, independence, and the preservation of their national identity. The continuing serious violations of human rights by the ruling regime is deplorable and this Committee calls for an end to the persecution of opposition leaders and for the liberation and rehabilitation of political prisoners, among them Mikalai Statkevich, leader of the BSDP (NH), a member party of the Socialist International.

The Committee supports the activities of its member party in Kazakhstan, the Nationwide Social

Democratic Party, OSDP, in its efforts to promote social democratic values in the region. It welcomes the adoption by the OSDP of a new programme, “Social Democracy – the way of the XXI Century”, and the strategy of the party with regard to the expansion of its social base. The Committee also expresses its full solidarity with the party in its struggle for the country’s political modernisation, and for making this irreversible.

The SI Committee for the CIS, Caucasus and Black Sea considers that it is necessary to remove all outstanding questions regarding the status of the Social Democratic Party of Azerbaijan, following the decisions of the 12th Congress of the SDPA. This is the only social democratic party in Azerbaijan and is a true social democratic party, with a strong belief in our common values. The SDPA abides by the Statutes of the Socialist International and is guided by its programme and principles. The social democratic parties of this region declare their solidarity with the Social Democratic Party of Azerbaijan and ask the SI Ethics Committee to re-establish its status in the SI.

Turkey

Statement of the Socialist International on the situation in Turkey

17 June 2013

Developments in Turkey during the last three weeks have been followed with increasing concern by the international community.

The Turkish government, which should respond to the grievances of the citizens who are protesting, and act in accordance with the norms and principles of a democracy, is failing to listen and to seek a way forward to avoid the current spiral of violence, of beatings, and the victims that the world continues to witness as a consequence.

The current widening of the violence on the streets of Istanbul against demonstrators, involving not only the police force but also of sympathisers of the government, which is also being seen in other parts of the country, is a matter of grave concern.

We therefore reiterate our call on the Turkish government to end the violence against the citizens who have been demonstrating, expressing their frustrations and despair at a government which appears not to be listening, and to refrain from acts which can lead to further violence. We call for a national dialogue by the authorities of the state and the political actors represented in the national parliament, to find a peaceful, institutional and democratic answer to the current critical situation affecting the country.

Equatorial Guinea

Repression of opposition protest in Equatorial Guinea is condemned by the SI

25 June 2013

A peaceful demonstration planned for today by the opposition Convergence for Social Democracy, CPDS, the SI member party in Equatorial Guinea, has been forcefully repressed, and last night six members of the leadership of the party were detained for several hours by government security forces.

The Socialist International wholeheartedly condemns these acts and calls on the Obiang regime to end the harassment of opposition forces and to respect the fundamental rights of the people of Equatorial Guinea.

The demonstration was planned to protest against the conduct of the recent parliamentary and local

elections where serious shortcomings were reported, including fraud, vote-buying, unlawful detention of activists, media suppression, irregularities in the electoral process and discrepancies in the election results.

The Socialist International is committed to remaining vigilant to the situation in Equatorial Guinea and will continue to speak out loudly against the anti-democratic behaviour of the present regime. The CPDS can count on the full solidarity of this global social democratic movement, which will not rest until all citizens of Equatorial Guinea are able to enjoy their full freedoms and fundamental rights.

Albania

Celebration of election results in Albania

25 June 2013

The Socialist International joins the people of Albania celebrating in the streets today, welcoming the results of the elections that took place last Sunday, which indicate a resounding victory for the coalition of the Left led by Edi Rama of the SI member Albanian Socialist Party, and a Vice-President of the International.

The strong showing of the Left coalition, Renaissance, is a signal of the desire for change in Albania, a desire to turn the page on the previous regime, and to work together for a modern, democratic country, enjoying its full place in Europe.

The SI Secretary General, in a press conference in Tirana with Edi Rama, congratulated the Albanian people and expressed sympathy with the victims of a violent incident on voting day. He praised the unification of the Left forces in the country as a demonstration of their will to work for a common progressive future, and hailed the high number of votes for Renaissance as a victory for Albania, for its people, and a victory for the entire social democratic movement.

Bolivia

Evo Morales, international norms, and equality among states

July 2013

The withdrawal of permission, after it had been granted, for the presidential plane carrying Bolivian leader Evo Morales to cross airspace, by several European countries, while he transited home from Moscow, represented a grave infringement of the immunities and rights recognised for Heads of State, and endangered the lives of all those on board the aircraft.

These developments demonstrate, on the one hand, the fragility of recognised and long-established international norms, and on the other hand, the vulnerability of international actors, such as leaders of sovereign states, vis-à-vis other powers in the international political system.

We therefore share the sentiments of the protest expressed by a number of governments on the behaviour of the authorities that took the decisions that affected President Evo Morales, and the solidarity expressed with the Head of State of Bolivia and its people.

We firmly draw attention to the responsibility of all states and governments to act in accordance with the established international norms without any exception. Furthermore, any violation of international law by major powers against smaller states is not only a serious offence but a moral wrongdoing.

The task remains to secure the fundamental principle that all states are equal as the basis of a proper multilateral system in international relations and where no one state has overarching power over another state. Measures must be taken to ensure that what President Morales has suffered will never be repeated.

Egypt

In support of democracy and national unity in Egypt

4 July 2013

One year on from sweeping to power with 13 million votes, President Mohamed Morsi and his Moslim Brotherhood dominated government have been forcefully removed from office by the Egyptian military.

President Morsi, the first freely-elected President of Egypt, was at his lowest in terms of popularity, having failed to deliver on the democratic promises he was elected to fulfil. Last December he granted himself unchallengeable powers, which shocked both the Egyptian people and the international community, and then rushed through a referendum on the new constitution despite a lack of agreement among the political forces. Since then, discontent and national discord have intensified, leading to a deeply divided and polarised nation. The economy has deteriorated, unemployment and inflation continue to rise, and GDP growth has severely shrunk.

A military coup, however, is out of step with democracy and the Socialist International calls on the interim authorities to uphold the rule of law and to immediately restore democracy, pressing ahead with presidential and parliamentary elections without delay.

The popular revolution which shook the country two years ago has not ushered in the era of democracy and freedoms that the Egyptian people had hoped for, and which so many bravely fought and died for. But advances have been made and it is clear that the vast majority of the people of Egypt will not give up the struggle for full democracy.

The Socialist International looks forward to a peaceful outcome to the problems facing Egypt today and calls on the population as a whole to respect each others' differences, regardless of religion, beliefs or gender, to unite in the interests of the nation and to do justice to those citizens who paid with their lives for a better country, living in peace and democracy. The SI reiterates its solidarity with all those in Egypt who share the ideals and principles of social democracy and who remain engaged in defending the democratic goals of the 2011 revolution.

FTT

Decision of European Parliament on FTT

4 July 2013

The adoption, by the European Parliament, with a large majority, of the report of MEP and Vice-President of the EP, Anni Podimata, for the implementation of a financial transactions tax (FTT) by 11 EU member states within the framework of enhanced cooperation, is an additional significant step in the right direction.

Through this decision, the persistent and concerted efforts made by the Socialist International and many democratic and progressive forces in Europe and around the world, are also rewarded.

Now, this effort should be continued, aiming at:

First, the leaders of the EU countries, so that the European Council takes, as soon as possible, a final decision for the immediate implementation of the measure in at least the 11 EU countries that have adopted it, and hopefully, soon, all member states.

Second, all leaders, beyond the EU, as well as the G20, in order to promote the measure at global level.

To support further this initiative, is the duty of all democratic and progressive forces around the world, in order to defend the public interest and restore a sense of social justice.

I note, once again, that this is one of the few decisions taken by the EU during the current sovereign debt crisis that has a social character. The implementation of this measure will have a number of positive consequences for all EU citizens for the following reasons:

- It specifically targets speculators, whose greed had a catastrophic impact on our economies and the life of our citizens.
- It targets the financial sector, which remains inadequately regulated in a fragmented global framework.
- It creates an opportunity to redress some of the injustices created by a financial sector who although responsible for the crisis, profited from its consequences.
- It will raise funds that will help reducing the deficits of EU member states in a more socially just manner.
- It will contribute in restoring the proper role of the financial sector, which is to finance and facilitate the real economy.

To a large extent, the decision of the European Parliament is an achievement in accordance with one of the main goals of the agenda we set and are pursuing together, all member parties of the Socialist International: tighter regulation and oversight of financial transactions and tax havens.

Expecting that the necessary procedures in the EU will be implemented shortly, I urge more countries and institutions to contribute in the efforts to adopt this measure at international level for the benefit of both national economies and global citizens.

George A. Papandreou
President of the Socialist International

Committee on Local Governments

SI Committee discussions in Chile and meeting with Michelle Bachelet

19-20 July 2013



The SI Committee on Local Governments, established by decision of the Council in February this year in Cascais, Portugal, held its first meeting in Santiago, Chile on 19 and 20 July. The Committee also held a meeting with the candidate of the progressive forces for the Presidency of the Republic, Michelle Bachelet, who shared her views with the representatives of the Socialist International, commenting on some of the main objectives of her government programme. Bachelet was nominated as candidate with a wide margin of preference in a process of primaries that took place in Chile for the first time on 30 June 2013, with the participation of more than three million citizens.

The Committee discussions, which took place in the emblematic Museum of Remembrance and Human Rights in Santiago, brought together local authorities from different cities worldwide.

At the opening of the meeting, the SI Secretary General, Luis Ayala, highlighted the importance that our movement gives to the creation of spaces where representatives and authorities of local governments can come together and reflect on issues concerning the mechanisms and strategies for building local governance and developing public policies in their specific areas of work. The meeting in Santiago had among other objectives, he said, to identify of priorities and common tasks that were necessary today, from the commitment to the principles and values of the global social democratic movement, to starting the preparations for the IV SI World Conference of Local Authorities which will take place in 2014; the discussion of future activities of the Committee, and the election of the Committee's authorities.

The Mayor of Santiago, Carolina Tohá, in her welcoming address, underlined the value and scope of the work of local governments to improve the quality of democracy. In this respect, she stressed the importance of local governments to help achieve better social equality, which results from being in close contact with the citizens and permanently in touch with their demands.

At the same time, she noted the need for compatibility between the productive development of cities and sustainable environmental policies, calling for a rethinking and reshaping of the role of local governments to create spaces of harmonious co-existence, of respect and acceptance, resolving the complexities of citizens living together in a diverse society.

Amongst the priorities and tasks of democratic socialism highlighted during the debate, was the strengthening of citizens' rights in the creation of universal public policies, which, as was stated, would require the recognition of these rights with firm conviction when pursuing these policies. In this regard, local governments must accept their responsibility to guarantee the rights aimed at democratising access to social services for the various groups in society, with their differences and specific conditions. Likewise, it is necessary to promote models of management based on premises such as the incorporation of a focus on gender; of policies that respond to the needs of historically disadvantaged groups, and which are also sustainable and compatible with the environment; policies that take into account the security of citizens; and the incorporation of the participative component as a cross-cutting element in all the tasks involved in local public work.

The participating local authorities agreed that one of the priorities to advance in matters of management and local governance is decentralisation. Without that element, any attempt to improve the management of local governments and their role in the process of formulation of policies focused on rights will result in responses that are deficient and ineffective. This decentralisation must start in the political arena, allowing local governments more autonomy in their decision-making, and then turn to economic decentralisation, assigning higher budgets to meet the aspirations and demands of the citizens. In this connection, it was considered that financial independence is essential to advance with the autonomy of local governments.

Within the framework of the discussions, attention was also given to the crucial need to listen carefully to the voice of the citizens when defining the agendas and determining the priorities of management at local level. Along with building mechanisms of participation, issues such as inclusion, transparency and quality of management are decisive to legitimise the action and sense of politics, above all in an urban environment, where the proximity between authority and the citizen is the first instance of the democratic process.

The election of the authorities of the Committee, one of the other points on the agenda of the meeting, in accordance with the statutory requirements of the International, also received the attention of participants. Carolina Tohá, Mayor of Santiago, Chile, was elected Chair of the Committee. Alfred Okoe Vanderpuije, Mayor of Accra, and Alexander Burkov, Vice-President of the Commission on Local Government of the Russian Parliament and candidate to Mayor of Ekaterinburg, were elected as Vice-Chairs of the Committee.

The meeting concluded with an exchange of views on the future tasks of the Committee, including the adoption of a common position on upcoming initiatives and other international meetings of Mayors and local authorities; advancing with the preparation of the IV World Conference of Mayors of the Socialist International scheduled for 2014, and the forthcoming Committee meetings to take place in other continents. Finally, the meeting adopted a Declaration giving a brief review on the themes under discussion. The meeting concluded with expressions of sincere appreciation from all the participants to their Chilean hosts.

DECLARATION

Original: Spanish

The Socialist International (SI) held the first meeting of its Committee on local governments in Santiago de Chile on 19-20 July. This meeting, led by the Secretary General of the SI, Luis Ayala, aimed at developing and strengthening the coordination of local authorities within the Socialist International. The discussions were fruitful, rich in analysis and proposals, and defined priorities and current tasks for local governments, reinforcing a common progressive platform.

The meeting focussed on the challenge of improving the quality of democracy, building cities based on solidarity in order to advance towards the achievement of equality of opportunity and social justice. The delegates agreed on the importance of this meeting, considering the necessary interrelationship among the diverse actors, members of our International. The challenges we face today with regard to governance must be met with clear solutions and open-minded considerations with respect for the values of social democracy that are today more than ever necessary to place the citizen at the centre of politics and its management.

It is our duty to contribute to the governance of diverse societies and cities in their cultural, social and political expression, and to respond to this challenge in a way that accommodates all forms of diversity that co-habit in our cities.

The SI Committee on Local Governments agreed the following:

To guide the formulation of public policies for the purpose of building integrated cities to allow social inclusion. This involves the promotion of development and the access to goods and services in an environment of social diversity, including the historically disadvantaged sectors, responding to gender, economic and ethnic barriers that exist in our societies.

To advance towards the building of more autonomous local governments through decentralisation from the central government. Today, there exists the deep need in local governments to achieve a political autonomy in decision-making, and a financial autonomy for the economic sustainability of local management. Local governments are the first instance of power and contact with the citizens, and require greater empowerment to widen the scope of action and allow the citizens and their governments to lead and direct public spending where it is required, without a central directive body that can distort the actual intention of local politics.

The socialist and social democratic local governments must direct their efforts at advancing public policies with a rights-based approach, guaranteeing for all citizens universal access to public goods and social services. It is necessary to transform the paradigm of public policies, going from an approach that considers the citizens as mere recipients of services and public goods, to an approach of people entitled to their rights.

Within a context such as the current and generalised one of political disaffection, it is of great importance to instil in local, national and world governance the values and principles to inspire action that responds to the citizens' demands for more equality, fairness and social justice. These are values and principles permanently embodied within the members of the Socialist International.

This should involve greater participation and a sense of belonging in the public policies aimed at our citizens, thus ensuring that the action of our cities result from the opinions, views and participation of the diversity of people who live together in our communities.

Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean

Global politics and economy – the view from Latin America and the Caribbean

26-27 July 2013



On 26-27 July 2013, the Socialist International held a meeting of its Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean, SICLAC, in Ocho Rios, Jamaica, hosted by the People's National Party, PNP, with the participation of Jamaican Prime Minister Portia Simpson Miller, PNP leader and a Vice-President of the Socialist International.

The meeting was convened following consultations among members of the SI Presidium from the region and included on its agenda the election of the authorities of the Committee for the current inter-congress period. The agenda centered on two main themes: 'Strategies and regional policies to strengthen the role of Latin America and the Caribbean in the new political and global economic framework' and 'The social democratic vision and proposals for overcoming inequality and democratic deficits in the region in building more inclusive and just societies'.

Prime Minister Portia Simpson Miller, at the **opening of the meeting**, welcomed all participants and highlighted that her party was soon to celebrate the 75th anniversary of its foundation. She recalled that Norman Washington Manley, the first PNP leader, sealed the identity of the PNP as a social democratic party, dedicated to achieving independence, greater equality and social development for the Jamaican people. She underlined that this original inspiration continued today, especially in these difficult economic times with strong social pressures, citizen's demands and environmental concerns. Jamaica had undergone



its own challenges of decolonisation, then economic independence, and currently that of creating a society of greater equality and inclusiveness. In relation to the economic commitments that the country had assumed with international financial organisations, the Prime Minister concluded that it was important to balance the figures, but it was equally important to balance people's lives. In this regard, the political programme of the PNP in government has been economically responsible, while stimulating employment, education, health, housing, energy and respect for the environment.

The SI Secretary General, Luis Ayala, recalled the rich relationship between the organisation and the PNP, going back to the times of PNP leader and Prime Minister Michael Manley. Portia Simpson today, at the head of the party and of the government, is a good example for the international social democratic family of a stateswoman who from humble origins has risen to lead her country, connecting with the people, and responding to their concerns. He highlighted the programmes implemented for employment and social protection by her government in spite of the difficult economic situation which she inherited when taking office in 2011, following the consequences of both the wrong policies of the previous government and the financial crisis of 2008. Social democratic and SI member parties in Latin America and the Caribbean were

indeed the political force which, while strengthening democratic freedoms and citizens rights, have managed to move forward with economic policies centered on people, resulting in economic growth leading to jobs and more social protection, with emphasis on education, health, and decent pensions. Much still needed to be done to break the cycle of inequality which existed in the region, but every advance made in this regard stemmed from these policies.

Following the opening session, the Committee proceeded with the next point on the agenda, the **election of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee**. Meeting prior to the opening of the Committee, the members of the SI Presidium from the region present agreed to propose that the election process should follow the procedure applied at the last SI Congress, with the appointment of an electoral commission made up in this case of the SI Vice-Presidents from the region, chaired by Bernal Jimenez, President of the PLN, Costa Rica. This proposal was unanimously accepted by the Committee. The election of the Committee Chair, open to all candidates presented up to the moment of the vote, was carried out by secret ballot. Bernal Jimenez, after asking if there were any further proposals, informed the meeting that one nomination had been received, that of the leader of the PRD, Dominican Republic and SI Vice-President, Miguel Vargas. Following a secret vote, Vargas was duly elected.

For the position of Vice-Chair, the Committee held an exchange of views with regard to maintaining a balance of one third of either gender in the posts to elect, deciding that two vice-chairs should be elected to this end. Bernal Jimenez reported that the candidacy of Márcio Bins Ely, of the PDT, Brazil, had been received. The chair of the Electoral Commission asked the meeting for a decision on conducting the election of the other vice-chair at this or the next meeting, as on the agenda only one vice-chair was originally foreseen. It was agreed by vote to hold the election of the other vice-chair at the following meeting of the Committee. A vote by secret ballot took place on the candidature of Márcio Bins Ely and he was subsequently elected.

Miguel Vargas, following his election as Chair of the Committee, thanked participants for their confidence and said that he was humbled to assume this responsibility which once, at the Committee's first creation back in 1980, was occupied by a man from his party, the PRD, who had left an indelible imprint on the political history of his country and on our movement in Latin America and the Caribbean, José Francisco Peña Gómez. In turn, Márcio Bins Ely expressed his gratitude, and that of his party, for his election as Vice-Chair and looked forward to working together with all the parties in this Committee.

The first main theme of discussion, **'Strategies and regional policies to strengthen the role of Latin America and the Caribbean in the new political and global economic framework'**, had two introductory speakers, SI Vice-Presidents Bernal Jimenez from the PLN, Costa Rica, and Victor Benoit, from the Union of Haitian Social Democrats. These were followed by many interesting contributions from participants. During the discussions, committee members underlined that globalisation brought with it great challenges and concurred that the region in general had emerged better from the economic crisis which began in 2008 than on previous occasions. It was recalled that the growth forecasts by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, ECLAC, reflected that the countries of the region had managed to maintain positive growth figures, and the forecasts for the coming years were estimated at around 3%. Nevertheless, they stressed that it was important to be alert and to act promptly to any eventual slow-down in growth and to promote and strengthen innovation, competitiveness and policies to stimulate employment and social protection in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, with decisive action by progressive governments in the implementation of policies which not only allow economically and environmentally sustainable growth, but which also enable the peoples of the region to progress with greater equality and better living conditions for all. Other issues highlighted under this agenda item, were the reform of international institutions, especially the United Nations system, and the need for a multilateralism respectful of international law and equality among nations.

The second main theme, **'The social democratic vision and proposals for overcoming inequality and democratic deficits in the region in building more inclusive and just societies'** was introduced by SI Vice-President Marcelo Ebrard, from the PRD, Mexico, and equally included many productive interventions. Participants stressed that Latin America and the Caribbean continued being a region of serious levels of inequality, and argued that social democratic parties should vigorously press ahead with their efforts to combat poverty, achieve greater inclusion and better living conditions for all citizens. They agreed on the need for institutions and laws that recognise, respect and guarantee people their rights, for

which healthy economies are necessary, promoting growth and national development. However, it was pointed out at the same time, that in countries of the region where there is sustained growth and economic dynamism, as in the case of Brazil or Chile, there can be seen in recent times the emergence of social movements that are posing new demands on governments and public policies. Committee members considered that such popular demonstrations often express the desire of people for public policies, institutions and laws which, within the functioning of a market economy, combine the creation of wealth with its adequate distribution and a network of social protection for the present and the future generations. This should materialise in the implementation of programmes ranging from quality early education to old age pensions and the care of the environment, as people call for greater solidarity in society and a commitment by their governments to the preservation of the natural and cultural environment for future generations.

Participants agreed that new technologies provide a good tool for our parties to be more effective in listening to the citizens, bringing people closer to politics and strengthening its legitimacy. Concluding this point, committee members agreed to undertake a process to identify key issues in the current work of SI parties throughout the region, upon which to share ideas and experiences for dealing with them. In this endeavour, current issues of concern to people in the region should also be included, as for instance the opinion of SI parties on the proposals to decriminalise some drugs to reduce violence, or making secondary and higher education more accessible to the population, or securing a greater increase in the transfer of resources from carbon emitting countries which generate global warming, to those which suffer the effects.

Following the discussions on the main themes, the Committee heard reports on **the national situation in different countries of the region**. Where progressive parties are currently in government and will be facing elections next year, as in the case of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Uruguay or Brazil, the meeting was informed of the efforts being carried out by the social democratic forces and their prospects for re-election. On the other hand, in countries such as Chile, where SI member parties are in opposition, having been in coalition government for twenty years between 1990 and 2010, it was observed that there was the strong prospect of a return to power in forthcoming elections to be held in November this year. It was noted that in Panama, where elections were due to be held in 2014, the candidate of the SI member party was currently leading the opinion polls. The situation in Haiti was of particular concern, where parliamentary and municipal elections had been deferred since 2011, adversely affecting the normal democratic functioning of that Caribbean nation. The Committee adopted a Declaration on Haiti, calling for a normalisation of the political process and the carrying out of elections before the end of this year.

The meeting concluded with final words from Prime Minister Portia Simpson Miller, who thanked all participants for their presence in Jamaica, appreciating their solidarity, and inviting them back for the PNP's Conference in September to celebrate its 75th year of existence.

DECLARATION ON HAITI

Original: French

Meeting in Ocho Rios, Jamaica, on 26-27 July 2013, the SI Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean (SICLAC), has discussed, among other things, the deficits of democracy in the region and reflected on strategies to promote the creation of more just and inclusive societies. On the specific situation of Haiti, SICLAC is concerned by the fact that since 2011 elections have not been organised to renew one third of the Senate and the regional communities.

SICLAC calls all political sectors – the Haitian government as well as the opposition – to work within a spirit of democracy and responsibility, to avoid an institutional and political crisis in the country which could damage the progress in that nation.

To this effect, SICLAC suggests that all sectors engage in a political dialogue, to allow for the holding of senatorial and local elections before the end of the year 2013. This will help Haiti to continue on the road towards democratic progress and of economic and social change, to the benefit of its people who have already suffered so much due to repeated political crises.

Egypt

The urgent need to restore Egypt's democratic agenda

31 July 2013

During recent weeks, the world has been witnessing a dramatic departure from the democratic agenda in Egypt. The political situation has continued to deteriorate rapidly, further diminishing the prospects for national reconciliation and democracy.

The violent crackdown and extreme use of force by the army and police against demonstrators, which has resulted in scores of deaths and many more injured, is deplorable and is unequivocally condemned by the Socialist International.

Political persecution must stop. Mohamed Morsi and all members of the opposition under arrest must be released.

The right to peaceful demonstration must be respected.

Restrictions placed on opposition media outlets and on freedom of expression must be immediately lifted. The return to the deployment of the police units used to suppress demonstrations, the same units that were suspended following the 2011 uprisings, is utterly unacceptable, as is granting the interim Prime Minister the power to place the country under a state of emergency, as in the past.

Egypt's democratic agenda, brought forward by the millions who wanted to do away with the repression and human rights violations of previous years, must be urgently restored. As stated by our International, the interim authorities resulting from the military intervention must uphold the rule of law and engage in the preparation of presidential and parliamentary elections without delay. Nothing less than true democracy, the enjoyment of freedoms and rights for all, should be the way forward after the sacrifices of so many since 2011. The Socialist International calls on all the Egyptian citizens, all groups and all political parties to give priority to dialogue, pluralism, mutual recognition and respect, preserving the spirit and goals of the 2011 revolution.

Mali

SI in Mali with Keita for crucial elections

13 August 2013

An Socialist International delegation to Mali took place from the 8-14 August for the second round of the presidential elections that took place on Sunday the 11 August.



SI delegation with Ibrahim Boubacar Keita



SI delegation with HE President Dioncounda Traoré

Syria

The responsibility of the international community towards the Syrian people

4 September 2013

In March 2011 the world began to witness anti-government protestors in Syria taking to the streets calling for an end to President Bashar al-Assad's regime and for an opening of the way for a democratic system and the enjoyment of rights and freedoms for all the Syrian people. From the outset, the Socialist International, consistent with its principles and values and its commitment to all those in the world struggling for democracy and fundamental rights, has openly supported these demands.

Throughout the period since the protests began, the Syrian regime has ignored these calls from its people, as well as calls from members of the international community, responding instead with violence and brutality, including gross violations of human rights, indiscriminate torture, repression and executions. This has resulted in a deepening of the conflict with, to date, over 100,000 deaths, as stated by the United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon.

Today, as a consequence, close to 5 million Syrians are internally displaced, according to international voluntary organisations, and almost 2 million are homeless refugees in neighbouring countries.

The use of chemical weapons in Syria on the 21st of August 2013 has shocked the world. This deeply abhorrent and immoral act caused the deaths of over 1400 innocent civilians, including more than 400 children, and constitutes a crime against humanity that in our view, neither the international community nor any country can ignore.

Syria is reported to be one of the countries in the world with the largest stockpile of chemical weapons, under the control of the ruling regime. It must be restated clearly that the development, production, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons violates the widely accepted 1993 Chemical Weapons Convention, which bans the use of chemicals as weapons of mass destruction.

In our view, all the democratic nations of the world, and their citizens, have today a responsibility towards the Syrian people and all those who have been victims of this atrocious slaughter. We cannot turn our heads. The hour requires a broad and decisive international initiative to put an end to the horror and carnage in Syria and the suffering of its people, and to ensure that this type of crime is never again repeated. At the same time, as a priority, there remains the need for a political framework to open the way for democratic change in Syria that is fully inclusive of the entire population.

The world would be a better place, and the cause of peace would be greatly advanced, by nations acting together through the United Nations. To this end, the UN needs to urgently confirm the facts regarding these atrocities in Syria and to quickly define an international response, and to hold accountable those responsible. The coming days will be crucial in advancing common positions on this critical issue and the Socialist International appeals to all nations, and particularly those who are members of the UN Security Council, to lead the way with an accord that would set an example in building a safer world for tomorrow.

Jamaica

PNP 75th Anniversary Symposium

4 September 2013



Reflecting on the "Past-Building for the Future"

Presidium

6th annual meeting of the SI Presidium and Heads of State and Government, United Nations, New York

26 September 2013



Members of the SI Presidium, heads of state and government from SI member parties, heads of UN agencies and international organisations and a number of foreign ministers gathered at the United Nations headquarters in New York on the 26th September for the 6th annual meeting in conjunction with the UN General Assembly. The main themes of the meeting

were the latest developments in the struggles to gain new democracies in the world, as in Syria and Egypt, with a particular focus on peace, security and human rights; and the social democratic commitment to end poverty and to equality, incorporating our contribution to the post-2015 Development Agenda.

Heads of state and government present included the recently-elected President of Mali, Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, prime ministers Elio Di Rupo (Belgium) and Edi Rama (Albania), both SI vice-presidents, Navinchandra Ramgoolam, prime minister of Mauritius, and Joseph Muscat, prime minister of Malta. António Guterres, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and José Miguel Insulza, Secretary General of the Organisation of American States, participated as special invited guests. The meeting was chaired by SI

President George Papandreou, with participating members of the Presidium comprising SI Secretary General Luis Ayala, and SI vice-presidents Victor Benoit (Haiti), Nouzha Chekrouni (Morocco), Ahmed Ould Daddah (Mauritania), Emmanuel Golou (Benin), Alfred Gusenbauer (Austria), Ouafa Hajji (SIW), Eero Heinälouoma (Finland), Pendukeni Iivula-Ithana (Namibia), Chantal Kambiwa (Cameroon), Marian Lupu (Moldova), Mario Nalpatian (Armenia), Juliao Mateus Paulo (Angola), Henry Ramos (Venezuela), Ségolène Royal (France), Sandra Torres (Guatemala), Miguel Vargas Maldonado (Dominican Republic) and Carlos Vieira da Cunha (Brazil). A number of other senior government officials were also present: Manuel Vicente, vice-president of Angola, Titus Corlatean, minister of foreign affairs of Romania, Zlatko Lagumdžija, minister of foreign affairs of Bosnia & Herzegovina, and George Rebelo Chicoty, minister of foreign affairs of Angola.

The Presidium paid tribute at the opening of the meeting to the Ghanaian poet, activist and diplomat Kofi Awoonor, who was tragically killed during the recent terror attack in Nairobi. Awoonor, who headed the delegation of the National Democratic Congress to the XXIV SI Congress in Cape Town, was a source of inspiration for many and will live on through the legacy of his work, and those present agreed to convey a message of condolence to the NDC from the Socialist International.



António Guterres, as High Commissioner for Refugees, and former President of the Socialist International, addressing the Presidium

In the context of the focus of the meeting on the struggle to gain new democracies and the pursuit of peace and security, UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres presented the plight of Syrian refugees, painting an extraordinarily detailed and in many ways bleak picture of the refugee crisis and regional destabilisation that have been provoked by the civil war. Over two million refugees have been individually registered outside of Syrian borders, with many more internally displaced. Neighbouring countries, in particular Lebanon, are suffering very damaging political, security and humanitarian consequences. The high commissioner's contribution underlined the urgency with which a peaceful resolution to the conflict must be found. The Socialist International has been vocal in its support for those in Syria seeking a free, democratic and secure future, and participants in the meeting added their contributions, expressing the hope that further progress could be made through the auspices of the United Nations.

Members of the Presidium warmly congratulated President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita on his comprehensive triumph in the recently-held presidential elections in Mali, and were united in conveying their best wishes for success in the difficult and crucial tasks he and his country will face. President Keita thanked all those present for their support during an extremely troubled time for his country. He expressed his pride at belonging to a political family that was so warm, welcoming and human, and he pledged to remain an active participant in the SI's activities. Other speakers referred to the important role of solidarity as a key value of the global social democratic movement. Strong support had been shown from the SI and its member parties to Mali, a good example of this being the mission of the SI to that country during the elections. It was stressed that an important commitment to the ongoing strength and relevance of the organisation was the continued participation of those leaders once they reached government.

During discussions under the theme of the social democratic commitment to end poverty and to equality, it was acknowledged that the Millennium Development Goals would not be met in the majority of cases, and a great deal still had to be done on poverty, health and gender equality.

Poverty and hunger remain social democratic priorities, with different challenges faced in different regions of the world. In Europe for example, gains made in social welfare since the Second World War are now under threat from over-zealous and ideologically-motivated austerity plans which aim to dismantle the welfare state, whereas in Latin America efforts must be renewed to ensure that growth benefits more than the wealthiest few, with the continent described as 'not poor, but unequal'.

Progress on poverty in Africa is threatened by conflict. Though democracy was able to prevail in Mali,

such conflicts continue in many African countries and sincere concern was expressed that the ongoing crises in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo and in Somalia were escaping any meaningful international attention and falling under the radar.

Gender equality and the empowerment of women, another of the MDGs, has also been a key focus of the SI, and the need for equal gender representation within the organisation was reiterated.

The ongoing and future initiatives of the SI, as well as the emphases and priorities of the organisation were also on the agenda of the meeting. The Presidium reviewed the activities of the organisation in an extremely busy period since the last Council in Lisbon, during which the decisions taken by the Council have translated into a number of committee meetings, missions, delegations and initiatives.

Several interventions mentioned the recent revelations regarding the interception of private electronic data by security agencies. It was agreed that this was a serious threat to personal freedoms upon which the SI needed to take a stand in order to protect the citizens of the world from intrusive and indiscriminate surveillance, an unacceptable curbing of civil liberties in the name of counter-terrorism. A particular matter for concern was the extent of US espionage of Brazil, with presidential phone calls, embassies and commercial interests among the targets. It was agreed that the issue should be addressed in a statement to be adopted at the forthcoming Council, with the recognition that those who have experienced life under dictatorships were very wary of such monitoring tactics which were a way for authoritarian regimes to maintain control.

On the issue of espionage and surveillance, as in so many other areas, democratic oversight is of paramount importance. The need to continue to work according to social democratic values and principles, and the responsibility of member parties in government to offer support and solidarity to those facing a democratic deficit were underlined. Recent events, including the coup in Egypt, have drawn attention to fundamental issues surrounding legitimacy and the need to defend freedoms and protect human rights. As the International has stated, a coup is out of step with democracy and there is today an urgent need for Egypt to take once more the path to full democratisation.

Acknowledging the divergent paths taken by Egypt, Libya and Tunisia since their revolutions in 2011, it was proposed that labelling the uprisings collectively as the 'Arab spring' could be seen as applying a convenient label which fails to account for the massive differences between the national situations in different countries. The overwhelming importance of democracy was nonetheless emphasised by all those present, as democracy can for example give not only North Africa, but the whole continent, the chance to take its destiny into its own hands and to overcome language and ethnic differences. The SI must continue to promote negotiated, multilateral, peaceful solutions to conflict situations in the world, in line with its commitment to democracy and desire to bring an end to violence. In this context, the meeting took positive note of recent statements by the organisation addressing developments in Syria and Egypt.

The ever-critical subject of migration would be an area for future initiatives of the International. Migration is an issue that affects the vast majority of countries in the world, whether concerning the situation of those fleeing violence and persecution and the effect on receiving countries, or the daily hardships and threats faced by many migrants living in irregular conditions.

The Presidium decided that the next SI Council meeting would take place in Istanbul on 11-12 November 2013, hosted by the Republican People's Party (CHP), with special emphasis on current crises related to the struggles for democracy, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa, and conflicts threatening peace and security. It will equally include discussions to reaffirm the centre-left vision for the global economy with an emphasis on growth, jobs and equality, and for a new development agenda.

Rabat

World Summit of Local and Regional Leaders, 4th UCLG Congress

1-4 October 2013



Fathallah Oualalou (centre), Mayor of Rabat, meets with the Secretary General of the Socialist International, Luis Ayala (centre right); the Chair of the SI Committee on Local Government, Carolina Tohá (centre left), Mayor of Santiago, Chile; and with members of a delegation of mayors and local authorities

Guinea

The challenges of democracy: Guinea's parliamentary elections

11 October 2013

On 28 September 2013 Guinea held for the first time elections for a new parliament in democracy. Having endured more than 50 years of autocratic rulers since achieving independence in 1958, the country swore in its first democratically elected President, Alpha Condé, in December 2010.

There was, unsurprisingly, a high level of expectation from such a significant electoral process. These elections were originally foreseen to take place six months after the new democratic government took office. However, this timeframe proved to be too short to secure the necessary agreements, including all the political forces, for the carrying out of these elections, which were eventually reached earlier this year.

The voting organised by the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI), which included representatives of all the major parties in the country, was, despite reports of some technical or organisational difficulties, peaceful, open, and drew wide citizen participation, accomplishing a crucial step forward in this process.

In a country of approximately 11.5 million people, still without adequate infrastructure, communications systems and proper roads, and in an election where citizens had a choice of close to 2000 candidates for 114 parliamentary seats with 36 lists of candidates registered, the logistical challenges of Guinea's parliamentary elections have no doubt been immense.

Until now, the Republic of Guinea has not had the chance to build on the experience of a democratic parliamentary tradition, something which had been denied to the nation's citizens by successive authoritarian regimes. This has been reflected both in the difficult and drawn-out negotiations to prepare the elections and in the atmosphere of mistrust among political actors as the country awaits the results.

Clearly, any institutional democratic political framework must be built through experience. The time lapse in the announcement of the election results, for instance, demonstrates that the ten-day period within which the Supreme Court must sanction the results, has also proven too short.

These issues, and other alleged problems and shortcomings that have since been voiced, should not be used as a pretext to disqualify the elections. Today in Guinea, like in any other democracy in the world, the proper legal channels exist to hear any allegation in an electoral process, to check that the correct procedures have been followed, and that any complaint held, according to the law in Guinea, should be submitted to the Supreme Court, which is the only legal body to sanction the final result.

Democracy needs to be nurtured daily and it is only by recognising and following the rules and norms of democracy and the law that the necessary legitimacy of the new democratic institutions of the country can be established.

All individuals, groups and political parties have an obligation to contribute to the upholding of this path in this crucial moment for Guinea. Throughout the world we can see that it is only with real and true democratic governance that countries can manage to move forward. This young democracy must develop and learn from its own experiences to secure not only the newly gained freedoms and rights of all the Guinean citizens, but the country's stability, economic development and the wellbeing of its people.

That these elections have taken place considering the daunting myriad of political and logistical challenges faced by a fledgling democracy in a developing country, is thanks to the efforts of its citizens, the different political actors in Guinea, and of President Alpha Condé, whose political engagement, as his life has shown, having suffered imprisonment, exile and persecution, has only ever been associated with the permanent search for democratic freedoms and rights in his country.

Now, a new concerted effort needs to be made by the CENI and all other relevant officials to complete the process to arrive at final public results, and to include in its report to the Supreme Court, those cases which require its attention or further clarification.

The Socialist International will continue to remain committed and engaged in support of this new democratic Guinea.

Argentina

Socialist International closely follows investigation into attack against Governor of Santa Fe, Argentina

26 October 2013

The Socialist International has been closely following the investigation underway in Santa Fe, Argentina, looking forward to a speedy clarification of the facts surrounding the criminal attack a few weeks ago against its Governor, Antonio Bonfatti, which took place at his home in the district of Alberdi in Rosario. Bonfatti is a member of the Socialist Party of Argentina, a member party of this organisation.

The violence against the Governor, whose home was the target of 14 bullets, has been condemned and firmly repudiated by leaders and representatives of member parties of the International, who have highlighted the extreme gravity of this occurrence which appears to be a direct challenge by forces and elements associated with drug traffickers and criminal gangs to the declared will of provincial government to confront them.

The Socialist International, which stands in solidarity with Governor Antonio Bonfatti and the Socialist Party of Argentina, has fully shared the Governor's denouncement of this attack as "an aggression against democracy and its institutions".

Council

SI Council Meeting in Turkey

11-12 November 2013



The Council of the Socialist International convened in the city of Istanbul on 11-12 November, hosted by the Republican People's Party, CHP, a member of the SI. Leaders and delegates from parties and organisations from all continents attended the meeting, which had the following main themes on its agenda: "Current crises related to the struggles for democracy, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa, and conflicts threatening peace and security in that part of the world" and "Reaffirming the centre-left vision for the global economy with an emphasis on growth, jobs and equality, and for a new development agenda". A special session was also dedicated to the events earlier this year in Gezi Park.

The meeting opened with a tribute to the memory of former SI President and prime minister of France Pierre Mauroy who sadly passed away in June. Respects were also paid to the memory of Yasser Arafat, this date being the ninth anniversary of his death. The sympathies and condolences of the Council were extended to the victims of the immense tragedy in the Philippines and to the relatives and colleagues of the two journalists, Ghislaine Dupont and Claude Verlon from Radio France Inter, who were kidnapped and murdered in Mali in a terrorist attack. Tribute was paid to the six people who tragically lost their lives during the Gezi Park protests in Istanbul. The Council stood and observed a minute of silence.

Opening the meeting, the SI Secretary General, Luis Ayala, thanked the CHP for their hospitality and welcomed delegates. He said that Istanbul as the venue of the Council was the right place to address current struggles for democracy, freedoms and rights in neighbouring countries and beyond, and to extend our solidarity with those who courageously were advancing principles and values that we share. At the same time, we will be building on the spirit of Gezi Park which mobilised hundreds of thousands of citizens in Turkey capturing the imagination of the world. A crucial issue in our discussions would be the war in Syria which we wanted to see ended and a negotiated solution leading to a transitional government and to democracy. Democracy is also the objective when we discuss developments in Egypt, Yemen and other countries of the Arab world currently going through decisive days. Peace between the Palestinians and Israelis and a two-state solution remained a crucial priority and we should embark on an active programme to contribute to this goal. Another priority which needed to be addressed, was how to move forward strategies for growth, employment, sustainable development and human solidarity, to confront the harmful effects of austerity policies, growing inequality, disregard for the environment and narrow, self-centered agendas. The International belonged to all of its members and the commitment of so many to its purpose was its strength.

Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, leader of the host party and an SI Vice-President, warmly welcomed all delegates to the Council, expressing the pleasure and honour that the party felt in hosting this meeting. He underlined the great importance that the CHP attaches to its membership in the Socialist International, the largest progressive, social democratic organisation in the world, and to the CHP's work within the SI defending justice, democracy, freedom, equality and pluralism, against oppression and inequality, not only in Turkey but also in their greater region and in the world. He highlighted three significant problems facing the democratic struggles of the region: extreme groups and reactionary forces; ethnic, religious and sectarian fault-lines which were creating instability; and the possibility that foreign intervention, especially military intervention, might provide legitimacy to oppressive regimes and encourage extremist groups. The SI must back endeavours to solve conflicts through political means. In relation to the global economy, he underlined that millions of people were paying the price for the failures of the market and the greatest threat of our time is the global inequality which fuels extremism. All these economic and political problems, he said, needed social democratic answers. He concluded by quoting Willy Brandt: "Peace is more than the absence of War...it requires equal development and opportunities for all nations".

The Prime Minister of Belgium, SI Vice-President Elio Di Rupo, underlined the unique nature of the Socialist International as a world-wide forum for pursuing our common objectives, and in particular fighting against injustice and inequality. Those in office must help those in opposition who are struggling for social progress. Our citizens should not have to pay the price of a crisis of which they are the first victims, he said. Europe cannot be reduced to a single market without human values, and neither can the world. The financial crisis was a wake-up call and should not be an opportunity for cynics to destroy our social security systems that took years to construct following the second world war. Europe's foreign policy cannot be guided only by blind security concerns, otherwise this could lead to accepting coexistence with dictatorships without listening to or supporting the legitimate aspirations for freedom by those living under tyranny. He saluted the efforts of the Socialist International in favour of dialogue and in support of those who today struggle for democracy and a society free from extremism. Wherever there is suffering, he said, we must continue to strive for solutions that are just and humane. Diplomacy must triumph and we must call for the holding of the Geneva II conference. In the Middle East, we must support the peace negotiations underway between Israel and Palestine and unreservedly throw our weight behind the efforts of all those who sincerely seek a two-state solution.

SI President George Papandreou thanked Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu and his party for the warm hospitality extended. As a Greek and a neighbour, he expressed appreciation for the new friendship between the two countries, something that only a few years ago seemed impossible. He recalled the spirit that energised their work for rapprochement, the common commitment to peace and the merging into a common family of values which Europe represented. He highlighted the crisis in Europe today, which was wrongly labelled as financial – it was deeply political, he said, and was a crisis of democratic legitimacy. More solidarity was needed and a pooling of resources to counter mistrust and the retreat into nationalistic and tribal politics. In emphasising that socialism is today more relevant than ever, he expressed the strong commitment of the International to our core values of democracy and human rights, social justice, sustainable green growth and the peaceful resolution of conflicts, all of which face intensifying challenges across the globe. We need to reinvent democracy to create more unity among people, he said, and democratise globalisation to combat the increasing inequality in and between our societies. What was at stake was global peace and the existence of our civilisation. All the topics of our agenda were connected with democracy, not only in countries affected by recent uprisings, but also in mature democracies where there was a need for a more transparent and representative system. To succeed we must stand united, he said, and succeed we must.

The first part of the morning was dedicated to a special session on the events in Gezi Park which began in May this year in protest against the proposed demolition of the Park, introduced by Umut Oran, a vice-president of the CHP. Following the showing of a moving video, special contributions were made to the Council by representatives of different organisations and movements involved with those events, including Amnesty International, the Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey, the Revolutionary Muslim Movement, and the Chamber of Architects, as well as by artists and activists. The eyewitness accounts painted a powerful and vibrant picture of what happened in Taksim Square and the fight for democratic rights and freedoms in Turkey. A declaration on the protests in Gezi Park was adopted at the close of the meeting.



Ahmad al-Jarba, President of the Syrian National Coalition of Revolutionary and Opposition Forces

Under the **first main theme**, the particular attention that the SI has paid to developments in Syria and the need for an end to violence and for a political solution to the conflict provided the background to the discussions on the current situation in that country. Ahmad al-Jarba, President of the Syrian National Coalition of Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, who had been specially invited to address the Council, informed delegates of the decision of the organisation, taken the same day, to agree to join the Geneva II conference. This decisive step to open the way for peace negotiations was widely welcomed by delegates, many of whom underlined the important role to be played by the international community if a resolution to the conflict in Syria was to be found. Contributions to the debate on Syria were added by the official

delegate of the League of Arab States at the meeting, Mohamed El Fatah Naciri, who presented the view of that key multilateral governmental organisation, and by Wael Abou Faour who gave valuable insights to the discussions from his perspective as a government minister from the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP), the SI member party in Lebanon, a country which has been profoundly affected by the conflict and refugee crisis.

On developments in the Arab world, the new first secretary of the USFP, Morocco, Driss Lachgar addressed the Council, and the representatives from the SI member parties in Egypt and Yemen referred to the latest situation in those countries and the ongoing battles by the people for rights, freedoms and democracy.

A resolution on Syria was adopted, outlining the Council's commitment to an end to the fighting and for a political solution as the only way to lasting peace in Syria. The end of the civil war and the installation of a transitional government should be the two pillars upon which the Geneva II process should build. The Council equally adopted declarations on Egypt and Yemen, which summarised views of the International and the issues raised in the debate.

In the discussions on peace and security, the prospects for Middle East peace and the role of the SI in this process was a focus of attention. Contributions were made by delegates from Meretz, Israel and Fatah and PNI, Palestine. With the backing of its member parties in Israel and Palestine, the Council designated 2014 as the Year for Middle East Peace, and in the declaration on Peace in the Middle East, agreed a programme of action to be carried out through the year to advance the cause of peace and the two-state solution.

On the subject of **democracy**, the Council also heard contributions from representatives from the Sahel region of Africa and other countries in that continent where democratic process were blocked. Among these was the particularly worrying situation in Mauritania where opposition parties, including the SI-member RFD, are boycotting the forthcoming elections due to an absence of a genuine democratic framework. The Council received a report from the SI member party in Equatorial Guinea, the CPDS, on the challenges for democracy in that country, and was also informed of advances made in Guinea where, under the leadership of President Alpha Condé of the SI member RPG, the first democratic legislative elections were recently held. Recognising the paramount importance of the issue of democracy in the African continent, a decision was taken to mandate the next meeting of the SI Africa Committee to present a resolution on democracy in Africa to be discussed and considered at the next Council.

A special message to the Council from jailed Belarusian opposition leader and former presidential candidate Mikalai Statkevich was read out. Despite the calls for his release by the SI and a number of governments and international organisations, Statkevich is still deprived of his liberty and many of his most fundamental rights in a Belarusian prison. In his letter he thanked the SI and its member parties for their constant support and work in favour of rights and freedoms in Belarus.



On the **second main theme**, the social democratic vision for the global economy, speakers from different regions and backgrounds contributed with their perspectives. Recognising that in the years ahead the global economy as well as national economies will face huge challenges, the interventions on this subject and the resolution

adopted, highlight the need for progressive forces to lead the way for banking and structural reforms, action against illegal tax evasion and tax avoidance, global development, the fight against inequality and poverty, and for social solidarity, clean energy and green growth. The adopted resolution outlines an agenda for growth, jobs, sustainable development and human solidarity, and calls for cooperation between progressive forces and civil society organisations to achieve these key objectives.

In line with a decision taken by the Presidium at its meeting at the United Nations Headquarters on 26 September, the SI Council also adopted a position on the current and important question of **espionage and surveillance**. A declaration on this issue outlines the need to respect international law and its institutions to rebuild a loss of trust in governments resulting from recent revelations of state-sanctioned cyber-surveillance.

On Puerto Rico, the Council reaffirmed the resolution of its previous meeting adopted in Cascais, and decided that the SI would attend the examination of this case by the Decolonisation Committee at the UN.

The two statutory committees, Ethics and SIFAC, which had been newly constituted in line with the reforms adopted by the SI to secure a fair geographical representation of the membership of the organisation and were thus more open and democratic, presented their reports to the Council. In his report, Gilles Mahieu (PS, Belgium), the new chair of the SI Ethics Committee, informed the Council that the Committee had discussed and agreed on a new set of internal rules of procedure for its work. In analysing the applications for membership, the Committee had one recommendation to put to this Council, to grant observer member status to the Justice and Welfare Party (JWP) of Somaliland, pending ratification by the next Congress in line with the SI Statutes. The Council approved the Committee report and agreed on the recommendation made for the JWP of Somaliland.

The Council equally received a report of the SI Finance and Administration Committee (SIFAC), presented by Maurice Poler (AD, Venezuela), co-chair of SIFAC. He reported on the work of the committee and on the current financial situation of the SI, drawing attention to the outstanding membership fees. The Council was informed that the committee was unanimous in that no unilateral decisions on the level of membership fees due by any member party could be accepted, as in accordance with the statutes these were to be recommended by the committee and approved by the Council. The Committee had, as mandated, discussed new membership fee levels and agreed on a budget for 2014 and approved the Audited Accounts for 2012, both of which were presented to the Council and adopted, along with the committee's report.

An election was held to fill the vacancy for an SI vice-president from Latin America, with Rafael Michelini, leader of the New Space party (NE), Uruguay, unanimously elected. In line with the decision of the previous Council with regard to the composition of the Ethics Committee, the Party of Bulgarian Social Democrats (PBSD) was elected as the remaining member of this statutory committee of the SI. The Secretary General's Report on the recent activities of the organisation since the last Council was introduced. At the closing of the meeting, the President and Secretary General of the SI once more reiterated the sincere gratitude that had been expressed by all delegates to the hosts for their fraternal hospitality. The CHP Vice-Chair Faruk Loğoğlu thanked all those who had attended the meeting on behalf of the host party.

Turkey

SI visit to MP Mustafa Balbay in prison, Ankara,

13 November 2013



Mauritania

Elections in Mauritania – the need for democracy

21 November 2013

The situation in Mauritania, just days before the municipal and legislative elections that are due to take place on Saturday 23 November 2013, continues to be a source of great concern for the Socialist International. The country is suffering from a profound institutional crisis as a result of a great democratic deficit. Mauritania has been deprived of a legal parliament for two years since elections that were initially due in November 2011 were twice postponed, and the November 2013 elections have been convened without due respect for the established procedures.

The Coordination of the Democratic Opposition (COD), which includes the Assembly of Democratic Forces (RFD), an SI member party, has decided to boycott the elections due to the lack of democratic and fair conditions that permits all parties and electors to take part in elections that are transparent, fair and trustworthy.

The COD demands consensual elections, in which all votes are counted, it rejects the abuse of public resources by the government, it calls for respect for transparency throughout the electoral process, as well as impartial democratic institutions. This is particularly important, as the foreign company that provided the ballot papers for the presidential elections in 2009 and has been awarded the same for these legislative elections, is currently facing charges of corruption and the payment of bribes to obtain the contract.

The country is in need of credible and strong institutions in order to be able to confront the major challenges that lie ahead both nationally and within the region, such as terrorism, illegal immigration, the fight against drug trafficking, and initiatives for development and good governance.

The Socialist International reaffirms its full solidarity with the RFD, as well as with all democrats in Mauritania, who seek respect for their rights and for the democratic process. The existing legal and institutional vacuum in the country cannot continue, as the SI has stated in previous declarations. The Socialist International extends its support to the RFD and the COD in their proposal of a reasonable and realistic framework for organising, in a consensual manner, credible and transparent elections that will constitute an important step on the way to achieving a genuine democracy in that country. At a time when the struggle for rights and freedoms is at a decisive stage in the Arab world, nothing less than democracy will do for Mauritania.

Iran

Talks with Iran

25 November 2013

As President of the Socialist International, I welcome the positive outcome of the talks between the P5+1 (United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Russia and China) and Iran, facilitated by the European Union, concerning Iran's nuclear program.

It is a major step towards increased stability in the broader region.

This important deal, reached after intensive negotiations in a climate of mutual respect, paves the way towards a long term comprehensive solution.

The successful implementation of this first agreement and the achievement of a comprehensive solution will certainly address the concerns expressed by some countries of the region.

Consequently, it is crucial that, as agreed in the joint plan of action, the initial reciprocal measures are taken by both sides in the coming six months. Close cooperation with the IAEA is of paramount importance.

A comprehensive agreement on Iran's nuclear program could become a cornerstone and revive the historic effort of our movement for disarmament and for a planet without nuclear weapons.

George Papandreou

COP19/CPM9

Climate Change: The eleventh hour

27 November 2013



The Socialist International has been closely following the Warsaw Climate Change Conference, COP19/CMP9, which concluded on 23 November in Poland. Regretfully, once again little progress has been achieved on the most vital issues. There have been some positive developments and the SI welcomes these, but on the most pressing points, in particular that of sealing a new global agreement to replace Kyoto, and on firm and sufficient financial commitments from the developed world, decisions were weak or absent.

On a new global treaty to be agreed by 2015 and to take effect by 2020, negotiations were extended due to a lack of agreement but, unsurprisingly, this did not present any changes to the timeframe agreed on last year at Doha. Furthermore, commitments – ‘clear and transparent plans’ – are to be finalised in the first quarter of 2015 ‘by those parties ready to do so’, providing an irrefutable escape clause for parties that are unwilling to commit. While this COP did produce a greater level of engagement by countries that have previously been unwilling to negotiate, other countries remain reluctant, and this ongoing debate over who

should take the most responsibility hindered parties once again from finalising details on substantial commitments, contributions and cuts.

The SI has already expressed disappointment at the planned time scale of 2015-2020, which risks further years of stumbling and time wasting. COP19 President, Marcin Korolec, has stated that 'Warsaw has set a pathway for governments to work on a draft text of a new universal climate agreement so it appears on the table at the next UN Climate change conference in Peru'. All nations should ensure clear, transparent, and sufficient plans, are submitted by the first quarter of 2015, to act decisively and urgently.

On the issue of the Green Climate Fund Board, whilst it was reported to be on track to complete its final steps, it appears some essential requirements for management are not yet finalised and mobilisation seems weak – another point the SI expressed concern over last year. We strongly urge the international community to support the fund with sufficient financial contributions. However, this COP has shown just how drastically financial pledges have dropped. The Socialist International is deeply disappointed that the question of finance continues to damage real and concrete plans for action. Whilst some developed countries have announced forthcoming contributions to support developing nations, the annual pledge of US\$100 billion by 2020, which was negotiated at the COP15 in Copenhagen in 2009, has never materialised and the figures suggested at COP19 are staggeringly lower.

There were nevertheless, some encouraging aspects of COP19. The first is that a financing agreement for the REDD+ program was decided with the backing of US\$280 million by a number of developed countries. A second positive outcome was the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage, a new initiative to address loss and damage associated with impacts of climate change. Work on this has been scheduled for early 2014 but, in underscoring the urgency of this matter for developing countries that have already been affected, the SI strongly urges this mechanism is treated as a priority. As we have stated repeatedly, developing nations continue to be the worst hit by climate change and the least able to deal with the consequences. Last year's COP18 was memorable because typhoon Bopha struck the Philippines causing devastation, whilst the delegates in Doha struggled to find common ground on climate change agreements. This year, the impact of typhoon Haiyan on the Philippines, causing more than 5000 deaths, occurred just days before delegates assembled in Warsaw for COP19. These tragedies stand as a stark reminder of the shocking impact of global warming taking place right now.

In summary, it is clear that parties have attempted to advance on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action and a number of decisions have been adopted. However, the timescale is too protracted, and calls for firm commitments too weak. Solid plans must be finalised at the COP20, and the subsequent deadline for countries to submit proposals must be met, in order for a new global treaty to be signed at the COP21 in Paris at the end of 2015. This treaty must ensure effective targets are achieved across the board. The Green Climate Fund Board needs to be functioning, and financial aid and support for climate change mitigation and adaptation must flow to those countries in need.

Time is running out. In May this year, it was reported that the concentration of climate-warming dioxide in the atmosphere has passed the milestone level of 400 parts per million and, in September after meeting in Stockholm, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) declared the global 2 degree warming threshold will be breached in the next two to three decades if we continue to emit greenhouse gasses at the current rate.

As the consequences of global warming hurtle towards us, the nations of the world face increasing threats, which are perhaps closer than anyone would like to envisage. A world of devastating and unpredictable weather with the power to wipe out entire populations, a world of disappeared nations, of drought and hunger, and one in which we will experience new wars for resources.

The room for negotiations and debate is coming to an end, and the time for action and implementation is now. This must be based on the very simple realisation that world leaders and national representatives taking part in climate change negotiations share a common responsibility. The task is a common task. It is one that transcends the debate over whether countries are rich or poor but binds the fate of all nations. It is the most crucial task of this generation, to secure the stability of the planet for the human race, and action must be seen from every corner of the world, from every nation of the globe.

The Socialist International has long called for action on climate change through sustainable development and energy use, low-carbon technologies and policies that can, and will result in economic growth. The report of the SI Commission that worked on this issue and that brought together leaders and personalities from across the globe, argued that this could and must be done, not simply for a sustainable future, but for a

future that is prosperous for all citizens from all parts of the world. So yet again, we urgently call for a unified response by the international community to climate change, to act now, in the interest of all, towards a world which is more just, more equitable and more respectful of the environment, and to definitely move from a high carbon economy to a low carbon society.

Yemen

Socialist International greets National Dialogue outcome

1 February 2014



The Socialist International is pleased that the National Dialogue Conference in Yemen has concluded with agreement among all political and civil society actors to charter a course as a nation and define an institutional framework to secure democracy, freedoms and rights for all Yemenis. Upon this agreement a new constitution can now be put forward. The Socialist International strongly supported the efforts of the Yemeni people to put an end to Saleh's authoritarian regime, which for so many years brutally repressed and violated human rights in Yemen, and gave

from the outset its unreserved encouragement to the process of a National Dialogue.

The Socialist International is equally happy that all political actors found common ground to build a shared platform, the Joint Meeting Parties, which was instrumental in the success of this dialogue, and of the role played by its member party, the Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP), in the entire process from standing up against the dictatorship to contributing to define with all its partners a new future for the country. Now, with this outcome the Yemeni people are writing a successful page stemming from the democratic revolutions in the Arab World.

This agreement commits Yemen to a unified state on the basis of federalism and democracy and confirms that the new constitution will be in line with the compliance of international human rights, norms and standards; representative, participatory democracy with open and competitive elections and freedom of political and religious beliefs.

Following the fall of the authoritarian regime, in March 2012 the Socialist International Secretary General was present in Sana'a on behalf of the organisation to congratulate the leaders of the movement for democracy and to express SI support for the new authorities stemming from the revolution, including President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi, new Prime Minister Mohammed Basindwa, Secretary General Yasin Said Noman and members of the Socialist Party of Yemen and the leaders of the Joint Meeting Parties, as well as those of civil society.

The sacrifice and efforts of all Yemenis, which have produced this major and historical result from the National Dialogue Conference must be now defended and supported by the entire international community. The attacks and acts of violence which aim to derail the democratic consensus arising from all sectors of Yemeni society are utterly deplorable and must be strongly condemned.

The Socialist International will continue to stand in full solidarity with the Yemeni Socialist Party and all the other political and civil society leaders in their work on the progression and implementation of the new constitution, and in support of bringing peace to a nation that now is by its own efforts able to turn the page on many years of repression, bitterness, division and violence.

Syria

For an Olympic Truce in Syria during the Sochi Games

07 February 2014

Ahead of the second round of Geneva II talks, and following the agreement on the removal of the country's chemical weapons, our priority in Syria must now be to address the ongoing humanitarian crisis. According to available estimates, more than 130,000 people have been killed since March 2011. Millions more have been displaced as refugees. Securing a ceasefire would provide immediate relief for citizens caught in the fighting and enable humanitarian aid to reach those in need.

In this context, the Winter Olympics in Sochi, provides a unique opportunity to revive the Ancient Greek tradition of the Olympic Truce - a tradition adopted by the UN General Assembly resolution 68/9 and signed by 121 countries. In this spirit, I welcome the statement made by the Secretary General of the United Nations to observe the Olympic Truce during the upcoming games. As President of the Socialist International and someone who has fought to revive the Olympic Truce in modern times, I have called for an absolute ceasefire in Syria, to be respected by all factions, during the Olympic Games in Sochi. This proposal was adopted and promoted by the leadership of Just Russia Party - a member party of the Socialist International - and subsequently passed in the Russian Duma. I welcome the strong statement made by the Russian Foreign Ministry in support of the initiative.

This gives reason for optimism that a truce is possible and creates the necessary momentum for achieving this goal during the Sochi games. The international community - and all parties involved in this conflict - must seize this historic opportunity by supporting this call for truce and prioritizing, above all, the humanitarian needs of the Syrian people.

George A. Papandreou

India

George Papandreou in New Delhi

11-15 February 2014



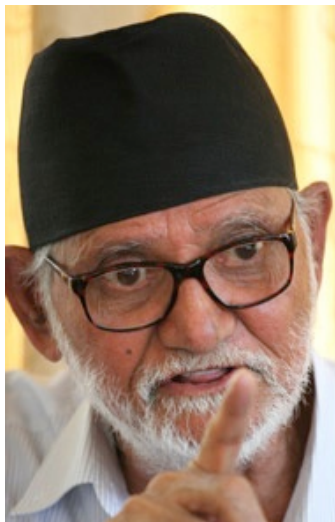
George Papandreou held discussions on regional developments and on cooperation between the Indian National Congress party and the Socialist International with the party President, Sonia Gandhi, the party Vice-President, Rahul Gandhi, and the Foreign Minister of India, Salman Khurshid.



Nepal

A new Prime Minister in Nepal

11 February 2014



Sushil Koirala, Prime Minister of Nepal

The Socialist International has congratulated Sushil Koirala, the president of its member party the Nepali Congress (NCP), on his election on 10 February as new Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal. Sushil Koirala got the support of 405 of the 553 members of parliament that took part in the vote. The NCP will now have again, after its last time in office in 2006-2008 under the late G. P. Koirala, the opportunity to bring forward its social democratic agenda and to strengthen the institutional framework of Nepal.

The NCP became the largest party in the Constituent Assembly following the elections that took place in Nepal on 19 November 2013, obtaining 196 seats, of a total of 601 seats. The Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist–Leninist) came second with 175 seats, and the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) came third with 80 seats.

The most crucial issue at this time for Nepal is the drafting of a constitution to define the foundations of a new democratic state. Since the abolition of the monarchy in 2008, Nepal has endured on-going political instability as a result of deep confrontation and disagreements between political forces in the country. A constitution for the nation has been attempted several times but has never reached completion, and this is the

priority for the NCP government with a view to ensure the rights and freedoms for all the people of Nepal, regardless of belief or religion, and based on the principles of a democratic society.

The Socialist International has long supported and engaged in the efforts of the NCP, during the years since authoritarian rule, throughout the many struggles for democracy it has undertaken and equally in their efforts to advance peace in the middle of grave past conflicts.

In recent years, the SI has held meetings in Nepal and SI missions have also visited the country, particularly for the previous elections that took place in 2008 at the time of serious conflict with the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist).

Sher Bahadur Deuba, of the leadership of the NCP and a Prime Minister of Nepal from 1995 to 1997, 2001 to 2002, and from 2004 to 2005, is a member of the SI Presidium and currently chairs the Socialist International Asia Pacific Committee.



Sher Bahadur Deuba

Venezuela

Venezuela : for an end to the violence

17 February 2014

The situation in Venezuela continues to be of serious concern for the international community. That in a democracy violence can reach the levels observed last week in Caracas and in other places of the country with people being killed and injured, opposition leaders being persecuted, with restrictions on freedoms, including the freedom of information, amongst others, point to the gravity of the situation in that country.

The Socialist International cannot remain indifferent in the search for more justice, equality and solidarity in societies marked by inequality, as we continue to see in that Latin American country. Nevertheless, we know through the experience of the political struggles of many of our own members, that it is not possible to achieve equality and justice if this effort is not accompanied by a deepening of the freedoms and respect for the rights of all people. The community of the new democracies in the world are testimony of the fact that the struggle for more justice and equality can never succeed at the cost of democracy and freedom.

In Venezuela, the Socialist International has regularly accompanied the electoral processes that have provided a mandate for the political authorities, and we have observed that those democratic exercises are not always reflected in the daily political life, which tends to be marked by tensions, disqualifications or the disrespect of fundamental rights and freedoms.

It is there that we can appreciate the fundamental reasons and causes of the critical situation of recent days. Violence, such as that carried out by irregular groups of individuals, as seen by millions of people on their TV screens, who, in full daylight, shot with impunity at demonstrators in the centre of Caracas, must immediately cease. The government authorities must contribute to creating a culture that replaces confrontation with dialogue and negotiation, as happens in nations living in democracy.

There is only one Venezuela, despite of the different visions of it which exist among its various interlocutors; it is a Venezuela which urgently needs to put an end to violence, and we know very well that this is achieved by respecting the rights of all, and today this is without doubt a critical responsibility of the government.

Venezuela needs the dialogue that comes with democracy, and to urgently find once again its institutional and juridical strength which is achieved when all its citizens enjoy their full rights and freedoms.

The Socialist International, which is following developments in the political life of Venezuela day by day and has condemned unreservedly the deaths of the three demonstrators last week, continues to hope that a constructive and respectful dialogue can be initiated in the interest of all Venezuela, in order to be able to overcome the future challenges that are today of concern to all Venezuelans.

Cyprus

Ending the stalemate in Cyprus

17 de marzo de 2014

The agreement between the President of the Republic of Cyprus Nicos Anastasiades and the Turkish Cypriot leader Dervis Eroglu on a Joint Statement is opening the way for renewed negotiations and provides a solid basis for a constructive dialogue that can lead to a functional and viable resolution of the Cyprus problem as soon as possible. It also creates the conditions for ending, at last, the unacceptable status quo.

As President of the Socialist International, I express my full support to the two leaders in the effort to end the stalemate and build the foundations for a united European Cyprus.: a bi-zonal, bi-communal state, member of the European Union, with a single sovereignty, a single international legal personality and a single nationality.

The success of this effort depends, to a large extent, on utilizing the momentum of the current unprecedented international interest for a resolution of the Cyprus problem, as well as on building the necessary trust between the two communities. The Socialist International supports any initiative for Confidence Building Measures that could help constructively the negotiating process. To that end, the proposal for the reconstruction of Famagusta represents a real opportunity.

There is no doubt, that the resolution of the Cyprus problem will greatly contribute to increasing regional cooperation. Greece, Cyprus and Turkey could become a "triangle" of peace and development. The natural resources in the Eastern Mediterranean provide an opportunity for fruitful cooperation, not to be missed.

At the end of the day, the resolution of the Cyprus problem will not produce winners and losers. It will produce only winners.

George A. Papandreou

Russia

SI Secretary General visit to Moscow

3-4 March 2014



Socialist International Secretary General visit to Moscow for meetings with Sergei Mironov, leader of SI member A Just Russia Party, and Member of Parliament, and other party members.

IPU

SI Meeting at 130th Assembly of the IPU

18 March 2014



Within the framework of the 130th Assembly of the IPU held in Geneva from 16 to 20 March 2014, the Socialist International held its regular meeting of parliamentarians from SI member parties attending the Assembly. Parliamentarians from Albania, Andorra, Belgium, Cape Verde, Chile, Cyprus, Dominican Republic, Finland,

Haiti, Mali, Malta, Mauritius, Namibia, Pakistan, Palestine, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom and Uruguay took part in the discussions which addressed some of the key issues of concern on the agenda of the IPU and in particular focused on developments in Cyprus, the Middle East, Mali, Haiti, Uganda and the question of Migrations.

Opening the meeting, the SI Secretary General Luis Ayala referred to previous meetings the SI had organised at preceding IPU Assemblies and underlined the positive feedback he continued to receive, both from member parties as well as institutionally from the IPU, on the value of providing a forum for enhancing the political and ideological dimension of such gatherings of parliamentarians. He hoped that this concept could be developed in the future by the IPU with the creation of formal parliamentary groups, as existed in national and regional parliaments.

The Speaker of the Namibian National Assembly, Theo Ben Gurirab, a former President of the IPU, spoke of this important moment in the life of the IPU as it celebrates its 125th year of existence. He recalled the struggle of the liberation movements over the years, including in his own country, and he acknowledged the important role played by the Socialist International in the decolonisation of his country as well as its continuing support today. He welcomed the good tradition in the SI of seizing opportunities for meeting, sharing and listening to each other.

Representatives from Cyprus, from the Greek Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot communities, presented their views and their respective policies in regard to the unresolved conflict there, and on the newly resumed negotiations between the leaders of the two communities which had begun on 11 February. It was highlighted that the interests of the Cypriot people needed to be the primary concern in the search for peace. Participants in the meeting expressed their satisfaction that the SI was a rare forum where representatives from both sides of the conflict could sit at the same table and express their views and concerns.

Members from Fatah informed the meeting on current developments in Palestine and the recent increase in violence, highlighting the main issues of contention. Israeli occupation continued, and the news emanating from the previous day's meeting between Presidents Abbas and Obama was not encouraging. The Quartet had left the US to play the role of peace-maker on its own. They pointed out that illegal measures being taken by Israel against the Palestinian community in Jerusalem and the issue of refugees remained a serious point of contention. They highlighted that the question of including the word 'Jewish' in the name of the Israeli state was hotly contested and that the archives of 1948 had revealed that President Truman had with his own hand crossed out the word 'Jewish', recognising at that time that it was not acceptable. They renewed their appeal for help in making Israel accept international resolutions and abide by international law.

In relation to Mali, the participants were heartened to hear from the representative of the RPM, Mali, of the improvements that could be seen in the country since President Keita took office in September 2013 and the gradual move the country was making towards national reconciliation. In November the Mali government had organised a general assembly on decentralisation and in December it had brought together different communities to focus on how to end the crisis based on a process of decentralisation, including a frank and open dialogue for sustainable development with peace and security as the only conditions. A draft bill on truth and reconciliation was due to be voted on in March, and there were various other draft bills in process to encourage all members of the population. She underlined that the continued support of the Socialist International and the international community at large was crucial for the success of these initiatives in Mali.

The issue of Migration was also addressed by participants. The implications for the Mediterranean region were discussed, and the representative from Malta spoke of the impact on his country, which was already the most densely populated in Europe. It was reported that the EU Council and Commission had agreed on a number of measures, but real action was needed. This was seen as a human rights issue both for the migrants and the recipient countries, and was a phenomenon which affected all regions of the world. The case of Cape Verde, which is part of the 'mid-Atlantic corridor', was also illustrated, as well as the need to address the issues behind migration, including the illegal trafficking of human beings. The gathering took note that a meeting of the SI Migrations committee was scheduled to take place in Tangiers, Morocco, on 2-3 May.

The representatives from Haiti and the Dominican Republic exchanged views on the question of the people of Haitian origin born and living in the Dominican Republic whom the Dominican court had declared were not citizens of that country, a ruling that affected many thousands of people. It was reported that Caricom and the Organization of American States had taken up this matter and it was noted that a Committee had

been created in the Dominican Republic to examine this issue. Meanwhile, the Haitian representative expressed concern over the safety of those people and asked for international engagement in finding a solution.

Participants at the meeting voiced deep concern over the Anti-Homosexuality Act signed on 24 February 2014 by the Ugandan President, despite previous assurances that he would not do so. It was stated that this Act violates the fundamental human rights of the LGBT community and legitimises discrimination and abuse. It was agreed that a public statement would be made on this subject, reflecting the concern of the participants at the meeting and protesting against this unacceptable action by the Ugandan regime.

Before reaching its conclusion, the meeting also addressed the question of the elections within the IPU for its next Secretary General following the announced departure of Anders B. Johnsson who had served in that post for 16 years, and the forthcoming election in October 2014 of the next IPU President.

SI Parliamentarians express concern over Ugandan Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2014

At their meeting in Geneva on 18 March, Parliamentarians from Socialist International member parties attending the IPU Assembly reiterated their concern and outrage at the Anti-Homosexuality Act which was signed into Ugandan law by the country's President Yoweri Museveni on 24 February 2014, despite his previous assurances that he would not allow it.

This Act violates the fundamental human rights of the LGBT community and legitimises discrimination and abuse. Furthermore, it not only applies to individuals but it also penalises companies and organisations in Uganda that support or promote gay people, carrying a punishment of up to life imprisonment. Homosexuality is currently illegal in thirty-eight countries of Africa and in some, such as Mauritania or Sudan, punishment includes the death penalty.

The parliamentarians were unanimous and unequivocal in their condemnation of this Act by the Ugandan government and called for others in all parts of the world to protest against it and to raise their public's consciousness about this heinous violation of people's rights.

Africa

Meeting of the SI Africa Committee, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

28-29 March 2014



H.E. President Kikwete and participants at the meeting

Leaders and representatives from over twenty parties and organisations took part in the two-day meeting of the Socialist International Africa Committee which was held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, on 28-29 March, hosted by the SI member party in that country, Chama Cha Mapinduzi, CCM.

The meeting was opened by CCM Secretary General, Abdulrahman Kinana, who warmly welcomed participants and expressed his party's pleasure at

hosting this meeting of the Socialist International. He made reference to the work and legacy of the late President Julius Nyerere, who was also active in support of the ideals of the Socialist International.

The Secretary General of the Socialist International, Luis Ayala, and the Chair of the Committee, Emmanuel Golou, addressed the gathering at the opening. Luis Ayala recalled Julius Nyerere and his work with the SI on such crucial issues as the struggles for national independence in Africa and South-South cooperation. He greeted the contribution of the CCM to the development of multi-party democracy, the struggle against poverty, and their policies for peace. Wherever there was a deficit of freedoms or rights, there would be conflict, he said. Socialists in Africa have demonstrated that peace needs to be nurtured with rights and empowerment. Democracy and social justice was also the vision of the SI for Africa. Emmanuel Golou, in his opening statement, recognised the achievements of the government of Tanzania for peace, stability and economic progress in the country. In his view, the main challenges for the region were economic development, combating poverty, bringing about true democracy and establishing a secure environment. He also highlighted the need to enhance the role of women and to ensure that Africa should play its due role in the international community. This should be achieved through economic policies that should not only concentrate on exploiting and exporting raw materials.

Among the issues discussed at the meeting were ‘Our commitment to peace and the resolution of conflicts in the region’; ‘Participative democracy, solid institutions and good governance’; ‘For an economy that serves all the people, respects nature and provides growth’; and the future work of the Committee.

Julião Mateus Paulo, Secretary General of the MPLA of Angola and a Vice-President of the SI, was an introductory speaker on the first theme. He underscored the need to do away with injustice, extreme poverty and bad governance in order to achieve peace and stability. While collective efforts had led to stabilising some areas of conflict, others remained. Conflicts did not only affect the countries where they originate but also adversely affected the process of integration and development in all Africa. Each conflict had its own long history with numerous details and responsibilities, which were not always taken into account in the search for solutions. Conflict was often the result of political actions and in this regard it was stressed that the Socialist International needed to be in forefront of the efforts deployed to solve them. Professor Eginald Mihanjo from the CCM of Tanzania also presented an exposé on this subject from the perspective of his country and highlighted several key areas. Firstly, wars are very expensive, so investing in peace was of great importance and in Tanzania the CCM had consistently championed peace policies. He noted that today most conflicts were internal rather than between states and that there was an increase in irregular threats, some of the causes being the lack of grass roots policies, political parties that lacked discipline and situations where policies were personalised rather than in the national interest. Poverty was a key threat to peace, it created situations of hopelessness and conditions for other kinds of ideological threats such as religious intolerance. The roadmap to peace must include the liberation of the poor, which then must be defended.

Other areas highlighted during the debates on all the themes of the agenda included the concept that peace and development went hand in hand, one could not exist without the other; that sustainable peace will only exist when the conditions that lead to war are removed; investing in peace means redressing economic imbalances and the democratisation of the wealth-generating process; tackling youth unemployment and converting the energy of youth into economic activity; creating quality democratic institutions, political inclusion, elimination of the practice of bad governance, support for national reconciliation, and ensuring that people are governed by leaders rather than rulers.

Democracy was at the root of all success, and democracy was needed at all levels, starting from cells in the communities, to regional and national representation, and in all the instances up to the leadership of parties. Ideological orientation was important, following on from the anti-colonialism and pan-Africanism that had guided the liberation movements, to avoid the emergence of extremism or authoritarianism.

It was recognised that Poverty was the biggest challenge on the continent. Many participants underlined the urgent need for African countries to manage their own natural resources, which for too long had been allowed to be exported elsewhere at low cost. Instead, all agreed that these should be used to generate employment and wealth for Africa and its people.

It was agreed that the SI Africa Committee should be used for inter-party exchanges and consultations; and for developing ways in which the SI can assist where needed.

During the course of the discussion on peace and conflict resolution, the Committee addressed the situation in Central African Republic, where the humanitarian situation is catastrophic, and agreed on the sending of a mission to see how the SI can contribute to ending the carnage there.

The Committee equally agreed on the visit of a mission to South Sudan as soon as possible, where the consequences of the open confrontation by the two warring factions on its people and their ongoing suffering called for an urgent end to the conflict.

In the context of these discussions, the Committee adopted a Motion on Mali in which it welcomed the progress achieved in the search for a way out of the multi-dimensional crisis in the country. It welcomed the election of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita and saluted his leadership in the efforts to strengthen democracy, the rule of law, peace, security and stability in Mali.

The situation in Cote d'Ivoire was a subject of concern for the Committee, where there existed a situation of generalised insecurity, massive violation of human rights and the arbitrary detention of politicians and military personnel close to the Ivorian Popular Front (FPI). Participants at the meeting voiced support for reinstating the membership of the FPI in the Socialist International and in a Resolution on the situation in Cote d'Ivoire, agreed to send a fact-finding mission to the country.

The Committee also adopted a Resolution on the situation in Swaziland, expressing concern at the violation of fundamental human rights and the arbitrary arrest and incarceration of attorney Thulani Maseko. The resolution also calls on the authorities of the country to unban political parties, including the SI member PUDEMO, and for national dialogue leading to a transition to democracy.

A Statement of the Socialist International Africa Committee was issued after the conclusion of the meeting, highlighting the key issues discussed.

Members of the Africa Committee reaffirmed their full commitment and support for the Socialist International and strongly opposed the efforts of those within the organisation to undermine it, declaring that today's International is open, inclusive and democratic through the decisions adopted by its membership at the last SI Congress in Cape Town, the first ever held on the African continent.



HE President Kikwete of Tanzania

On the situation in Western Sahara, while referring to previous resolutions, the Committee recommended the engagement of a sound dialogue between all groups and parties both in Morocco and Western Sahara for a peaceful and mutually accepted solution.

As part of the agenda, participants exchanged views on the organisation and future work of the Committee. A number of initiatives and proposals were aired, following which the Committee agreed to form a group to work on these ideas and to come up with a set of proposals for the next meeting of the Committee to take place in October this year.

The President of Tanzania H.E President Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete offered a lunch for all participants at the Presidential Palace. Addressing the gathering, he said he was proud to be a member of the Socialist International, where the sharing of experiences and challenges was very valuable. He was also very pleased that this meeting was being held in his country.

Participants were unanimous in expressing their recognition of the host party, the Chama Cha Mapinduzi, CCM, and H.E. President Kikwete for the warm fraternal welcome received and their congratulations for the advances and progress made in Tanzania under the leadership of President Kikwete and the CCM.

Migrations

Meeting of the SI Committee on Migrations, Tangiers, Morocco

2-3 May 2014



Under the main theme of “Humanising Migration”, the SI Committee on Migrations convened in Tangiers, Morocco, on 2-3 May 2014, hosted by the Socialist Union of Popular Forces, USFP. In a widely attended opening session, the gathering was addressed by Driss Lachguar, First Secretary of the USFP, Abdallah Boussouf, Secretary General of the Council of the Moroccan Community abroad, CCME,

and by Luis Ayala, the SI Secretary General. Representatives from member parties in Algeria, Angola, Dominican Republic, Greece, Iraq, Italy, Mali, Morocco, Palestine, Spain and from SI Women attended.

Being the constituent meeting of the Committee since its re-establishment by the Council, the Committee’s first task was to elect its Chair and Vice-Chair for the current inter-congress period. Habib El Malki of the USFP, a former Minister of Education and of Agriculture in two previous governments of Morocco and currently Chair of the Administrative Commission of the party, was subsequently elected as Chair of the Committee, and Marco di Lello, National Coordinator of the PSI, Italy, and Chair of the Parliamentary Group of the party, was elected as the Vice-Chair.

The discussions focused particularly on the crisis of migration in the Mediterranean and North Africa. The East-West dimension of migration was also on the agenda as well as the priorities on this issue in the Americas, including at the same time, perspectives from other regions. The serious situation of the refugees forced to flee armed conflicts in different parts of the world equally received special attention, and a call was made to reinforce efforts in the search for peace.

It was agreed that the positive results of the migration phenomenon needed to be emphasised in order to counter the growth of xenophobia and extreme political positions, as was the need to support efforts in all parts of the world against the mafias trafficking in human beings and to work to promote full respect for the human rights and dignity of all migrants. The situation of migrant women and girls was also highlighted, being particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation.

The Committee agreed that the SI should convey to the United Nations the need for the subject of migrations to be included in the new post-2015 objectives of the millennium development goals. It also agreed to develop a Charter on the Rights of Migrants, for which parties of the SI would be invited to contribute.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Committee adopted a Declaration of Tangier, outlining its discussions and goals. In terms of its future programme of work, the Committee agree to hold its next meeting in September in Italy, hosted by the PSI.

DECLARATION OF TANGIERS

Original: Spanish

The Socialist International Committee on Migrations, meeting in Tangiers, Morocco, on 2-3 May 2014, under the theme of “Humanising Migration”:

Expresses its appreciation to the host party, the Socialist Union of Popular Forces, USFP, for the kind hospitality received during the event, for their invaluable help in the organisation of the meeting and the symbolic importance of bringing the Committee to the emblematic city of Tangiers.

Recognises the suffering of those refugees who find themselves forced to flee the armed conflicts in countries like Syria or Central African Republic, and calls on the parties involved to advance efforts in the search for peace.

Declares its satisfaction that in places like Angola and Kurdistan once the conflicts were over, their citizens have been able to return to their countries of origin because the causes that led them abandon their homes had disappeared.

Convening in the region of the Mediterranean that experiences South-North migration, it deeply regrets the deaths of people drowned in this Sea and encourages the coastal states to undertake all means and efforts necessary in order to avoid the further loss of lives. At the same time, it recognises what is already being done by many of the countries concerned as well as by the European Union through their different programmes.

Highlights the efforts undertaken by some countries to manage immigration and in this respect, it supports the efforts by Morocco to regularise the situation of the immigrants in its territory.

In the conclusions adopted by the participants, IT WAS AGREED

1. To highlight the migration phenomenon as a positive fact, for economic development as well as for cultural exchange, as it helps to redress the demographic imbalances and, in particular, the low birth rates in the host countries, mindful that all analyses and opinions should also take into account the inherent risks involved in the countries of origin at the loss of human capital and brain drain.
2. To recognise the right of people to emigrate in search of a better life as a universal but limited *ius migrandi*, and at the same time this must be combined with the right of states to develop migratory policies that channel the migration flows in accordance with the needs and capacity of the host countries.
3. To support the fight of all countries against the mafias engaged in the traffic of human beings and against irregular immigration but, at the same time, to demand the most scrupulous respect for the human rights and dignity of all immigrants, including those who attempt to enter another country or to remain in a country under irregular conditions, as well as the provision of means for defending borders and the priority that should be given to life and to the physical integrity of people.
4. To express concern at the growth of xenophobic political positions, or those that lay the blame on immigrants, such as the case of the recent referendum in Switzerland, trying to unduly restrict the movement of peoples or their rights, and stigmatize the immigrants.
5. To promote a full integration of all foreigners in the host countries by means of policies directed at the entire citizenship with strategies that guarantee equality of rights, duties and opportunities, strengthening the foundations for coexistence and social cohesion based on the principles of equality, non-discrimination, citizenship, inter-culturality and inclusion.
6. To consider recognising the right to vote of immigrants integrated in the host countries after a reasonable length of time, and to facilitate access to nationality through residence.

7. Under the principle of solidarity, to guarantee to people who are in imminent need of refuge or who come directly from countries in conflict situations or from refugee camps in border countries, the right to asylum and international protection, and to foster agreements for their safe passage to secure territories.

8. To incorporate international cooperation and development cooperation which affect the management of migrations, based on the principles of joint responsibility and solidarity, in order to gain an integrated approach to the different facets when dealing with the phenomenon of migrations.

9. To take a special consideration of the migration of women which, in accordance with the latest data, represents more than half the total number of migrants, as well as to address the risks of subjecting women to networks of trafficking in human beings for sexual exploitation, something which calls for the implementation of specific protection measures.

10. To acknowledge the role of migrants organisations and of civil society as facilitators of the processes of integration and sensitising public opinion to this phenomenon.

11. To consider that the subject of migrations must be addressed at global level, and therefore within our debates and meetings of the Socialist International, given that the scope of the theme transcends national policies as it also does in many respects, international regional organisations.

12. To encourage all the instances within our organisation to influence the socialist and social democratic governments and parties to assume the ideas and values expressed herein, to transform them into laws and to incorporate them in the development of their public policies.

13. To request that our organisation convey within the framework of the United Nations the need for the theme of migrations to be included in the new objectives of the millennium post-2015. To this end, a joint work will be undertaken asking for contributions from all the members, in order to prepare a draft Charter of Rights of Migrants, which will be presented at the next Council of the Socialist International.

Latin America and the Caribbean

Meeting of the SI Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean in the Dominican Republic

9-10 May 2014



The SI Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean met in the Dominican Republic on 9-10 May 2014, hosted by the Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD). At the opening of the meeting, the Committee paid tribute to the memory and legacy of José Francisco Peña Gómez, who was for many years leader of the

PRD and a prominent figure of social democracy in the region and beyond. The admiration and affection felt in the Socialist International towards José Francisco Peña Gómez was evident in the many interventions of the participants commemorating the 16th anniversary of his death on 10 May.



The Chair of the Committee and leader of the host party, Miguel Vargas Maldonado, underlined the satisfaction of the PRD that this meeting was taking place in the country of José Francisco Peña Gómez during the commemoration of a new anniversary of his passing. He recalled that Peña Gómez was amongst the original initiators of the establishment of this Committee and of the opening of the SI towards Latin America and the Caribbean. Commenting on the themes of the agenda of the meeting, Vargas Maldonado pointed out that economic growth and the fight against poverty in the region must continue strong, ensuring that

there are no reverses in the wellbeing of the people and that the development process is ever more inclusive, just and marked by solidarity. In relation to the current democratic challenges, he stated that electoral democracy today must be strengthened, securing greater citizen participation and institutions that are able to respond to people's demands in a timely and efficient manner, with a governance that is transparent and accountable. He added that today's demands for education, jobs, health, housing, access to culture, to sports and leisure activities, security and the fight against crime must be treated as key social concerns which must be addressed by democratic processes. He also underlined the need to encourage productivity and the strengthening of institutions, both public and private. In his opinion, a better State is one that generates a dynamic of power-sharing in society, encouraging participation and decentralisation. In order to achieve "a new development model" linking the State with civil society, the role of political parties is essential, he said. Today, political parties also face important challenges such as the incorporation of new technologies into their daily work. To achieve the social changes demanded by the peoples of the region, it is important to train future leaders, to hold ideological debates, to have discipline and to be united.

The Secretary General of the Socialist International, Luis Ayala, thanked Miguel Vargas and the PRD for hosting the meeting at this significant time. He said that those who make up this International share the dreams and continue the work to which José Francisco Peña Gómez had devoted his whole life, adding that this long and rich common history projects itself into the future. Luis Ayala recalled that in 1978 a first Mission of the SI, with progressive leaders from the region, had travelled to Santo Domingo to support the victory of the PRD and Antonio Guzmán in the presidential elections, and to highlight their triumph. Two years later, in 1980, a major Conference was held in this country, which led to the creation of this Committee, bringing to fruition a desire shared by many and giving rise to the "second pillar" of the international social democratic movement after Europe, this being Latin America and the Caribbean. During the decade of the 80s, he said, the International and its Committee for this region of the world centred their struggles on the restoration of democracy in the continent and the respect for human rights. In this task, the leadership of Peña Gómez was accompanied by European leaders such as Willy Brandt and François Mitterrand, as well as other political figures who were emerging as leaders of the recovery of democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean, Raúl Alfonsín, Carlos Andrés Pérez, Alan García, Rodrigo Borja, Jaime Paz Zamora, Óscar Arias, Leonel Brizola and so many others. Today, when we observe the political reality of the continent, we feel heartened by the results achieved by the political commitment of those years. José Francisco Peña Gómez was always firm in the struggle for democracy in his country and in the region, he said, and for this reason his presence and his legacy have a Dominican, Latin American and universal dimension.

Concerning the themes on the Committee's agenda, the Secretary General underlined that the financial crisis of 2008 appears to have been met with less difficulties in the emergent economies of Latin America and the Caribbean than it has in the United States or European nations, some of which remain until today gravely affected, paying the cost of economic austerity policies with social and human consequences. Today, as a result, we are witnessing the resurgence of nationalisms and populist messages that simplify the

responses to the challenges arising from an ever more complex world. Furthermore, in other areas, we can see how multilateralism is weakened and there appears, amongst some, a new Cold War mentality. This region of the world must continue its efforts and its struggle against the destruction of the dream of a common destiny, of peace and internationalism.

Following the recovery of democracy in the nations of this region, came the quest for freedoms and rights. The conflicts that we see today are connected to the deficit of a broad range of those rights: ethnic, religious, political, gender based and those of native peoples, among others. The challenges to democracy become evident when, after free and fair elections, there does not appear to be any change in the deficit of freedoms and rights. Today's struggle is no longer for the restoration of democracy, Luis Ayala said, but to decrease those deficits. The Secretary General ended his opening address reiterating the satisfaction felt by all the SI members of this region in continuing to move forward the dreams of José Francisco Peña Gómez, which are still very present in this Committee, today headed by another Dominican, Miguel Vargas Maldonado, and he invited the Committee members to join their voices with those of all SI member parties for the next World Council of the organisation to take place in Mexico City on 30 June-1 July 2014.

Moving to the second point of the agenda, the Committee unanimously elected comrade Elsa Espinosa Chamorro of the PRI of Mexico as a Vice-Chair of the Committee. Margarita Zapata (FSLN, Nicaragua) and Clara Lieberman (PLN, Costa Rica), in congratulating the election of the new vice-chair, reiterated the importance of ensuring balanced gender representation within the SI and called on all the elected women comrades in different posts of the SI to actively work in accordance with their mandates. Elsa Espinosa thanked the Committee for having elected her and promised to work with dedication in the tasks of the Committee and for gender equality.

Bernal Jiménez (PLN, Costa Rica), an SI Vice-President, introduced the theme of the economic situation in the region. He highlighted that even though today the advancement and consolidation of democracy is evident in Latin America and the Caribbean, there still remains the need for progress in building a social democracy that is able to provide greater wellbeing for its peoples. To achieve this, he said, it is necessary to work for economic growth with fair distribution. Analysing the progression of growth in the countries of the region during the last three decades, he pointed to the slow pace of advancement and the risks involved in low levels of investment and capital creation. However, in his opinion, the last decade can be considered more positive than the previous ones, during which the debt crisis and the plans and programmes agreed among governments and multilateral organisations were evident. During the last years, he said, the control of inflation, the low rates of interest, fiscal control and the opening of the countries of the region to commerce and finances at international level are to be valued. Nevertheless, these auspicious elements and the good macroeconomic indicators are not sufficient to obtain more justice and equality, and comprehensive development. In relation to inequality in the continent, he also underlined that the figures in recent years were more encouraging than those of the 80s and 90s. Determined action by the State is necessary, in his view, in order to allow a decrease in inequality. Market economies do grow but they do not ensure justice, it is the strong and intelligent governments in the areas of salaries and fiscal measures that permit a more just distribution of wealth. He also highlighted the value of striving for environmentally sustainable growth and underlined the importance of education, research and the development of science and technology in order to foster economic growth. He concluded his intervention by saying that the challenge of social democratic policies is to provide wellbeing with a fair tax system, good governance, the fight against corruption and an increase of investment in education, especially science and technology, to consolidate the road to economic development in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The following delegates took part in the discussion on this point of the agenda: Iván Rodríguez (PRD, Dominican Republic), Francisco Rosales (FSLN, Nicaragua), Clara Lieberman (PLN, Costa Rica) and Ricardo Navarrete (PRSD, Chile). They all concurred with what had been said, emphasising the need to increase investment in education through tax reforms and others, as the best means of improving the quality of jobs, productivity and economic development in the countries of the region, while encouraging, through public policies, a more just distribution of wealth. In this regard, Navarrete referred to the case of tax reform proposed by President Michelle Bachelet in Chile, aimed at achieving greater redistribution through the collection of 8.2 million dollars to fund a profound educational reform with the objective of providing high quality, free education at different levels, and to expand culture, job placements and the level of income of the whole population.

In connection with the challenges to democracy, the Committee heard an introduction presented by SI Vice-President Victor Benoit (FSDH, Haiti). In his intervention, Benoit reiterated the social democratic commitment to democracy, human rights and social justice. The dictatorial regimes of Duvalier, Trujillo or Pinochet, among many others, dominated this region during long periods of the last century, which was due among other reasons, to the conditions imposed by the logics of the Cold War. Current advances are undeniable and of great worth, but, he continued, a commitment to democratic values is no longer enough. Today, what people need is a response to the economic and social demands from the same democracy. He identified some of the new challenges. There are those who undermine the very value of democracy with the pretext that democracy does not deliver the fruits that are expected from it, accusations that may originate from proposals emanating from oligarchies or elites, or from different kinds of populism. He referred to the emergence of processes he characterised as “democraduras” (hard democracies), born from supposedly formal forms of democracy but which are subsequently distorted while in office through control over the courts of justice, the parliaments or through generalised corruption. In his opinion, progressive political parties must take decisive action to prevent the failure of democracy. A participative and socially oriented democracy ensures a harmonious relation between those elected and the electorate to prevent the emergence of that which forms the basis of populist proposals surrounding the question of what is the concrete usefulness of democracy. He recalled the words of Peña Gómez who said: “In government, improvisation doesn’t have a place”, to indicate that it is of primary importance to advance in the education of new political leaders, also promoting gender equality in the area of political education.

On this point of the agenda, the Committee listened to the interventions of Junior Santos (PRD, Dominican Republic), Enrique Márquez (UNT, Venezuela), Marcelo Stubrin (UCR, Argentina), Francisco Rosales (FSLN, Nicaragua), Edmonde Supplice (FSDH, Haiti), Alberto Despradel (PRD, Dominican Republic), Clara Lieberman (PLN, Costa Rica), Isadora Zubillaga (VP, Venezuela) who read a letter of greetings to the Committee written by the leader of Voluntad Popular, Leopoldo López, from the Ramo Verde jail, Ricardo Navarrete (PRSD, Chile), Timoteo Zambrano (UNT, Venezuela) and Janet Camilo (PRD, Dominican Republic).

SI Vice-President, Rafael Michelini (NE, Uruguay) introduced the theme relating to political parties and the new challenges that face them. He began by highlighting the role of political parties in ensuring the normal functioning of democracy. These must be the representatives of popular will and for this they need organisation and resources. Electoral competitiveness among the different political options must be real and just. It is not enough to ensure that the electoral process be transparent. In this continent, permanently, and most notably during political campaigns, is that there is a great imbalance in the resources available to political parties. In many nations, the right wing parties have greater facility in obtaining private financing and to appear in the mass media. This reality can in part be mitigated through laws that ensure the public financing of campaigns, control of the electoral costs and the auditing of the origin of the funds that finance political activity. For the forces of the left, this type of norms would help to make it possible for political options to be presented to the electorate in a more just manner, he pointed out. Another aspect that requires attention concerns the furthering of gender equality in political representation. At the same time, smaller parties must be taken into account by the electoral systems to have more proportionality. The issue of participation is of the utmost importance and the left wing parties, he said, must fight against citizen apathy. An elite in power separated from the people who do not have the will to participate in the political process is a phenomenon that runs against democracy. Referring to the Uruguayan experience, Rafael Michelini evaluated the situation of the Frente Amplio, the grouping of different political forces that has governed his country during recent years. He explained that this diversity makes it necessary to have the widest possible participation during the drafting of the government programme that will be submitted for decision by the Uruguayan people in the general election during the second semester and in the case of Uruguay, close to 10,000 people will take part. In his view, the Frente Amplio adequately incorporates elements of unity, plurality, organisation and intelligence. On this subject, also participated the following delegates: Salim Ibarra (PRD, Dominican Republic), Roberto Birri (PS, Argentina) and Celso Delgado (PRI, Mexico).

Amongst the interventions on the national situation in the countries of participating member parties, the SI Vice-President from Venezuela, Henry Ramos, gave a detailed report on the critical situation in his country, also on behalf of all the Venezuelan delegates present. Further reports were heard by delegates from Puerto Rico, Fernando Martín (PIP); Argentina, Roberto Birri (PS), Brasil, Marcio Bins (PDT); and

Panama, Héctor Alemán (PRD). The Committee concluded its work adopting a general declaration on the themes of the agenda: the economy, democracy and political parties, as well as a resolution on Venezuela, and declarations on Haiti and Chile.

DECLARATION

Original: Spanish

The members of the Socialist International Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean (SICLAC) have opened and concluded a meeting on 9 and 10 May 2014 in the Dominican Republic recognizing, on the occasion of the sixteenth anniversary of the physical disappearance of Dr. José Francisco Peña Gómez, historical leader of the Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD) and of the Socialist International, his immense contribution to democratic socialism that today still constitutes a point of reference for our struggles.

The Committee expresses its firm support for the leaders of the PRD and their efforts to institutionally strengthen the party, maintain respect for its statutes and work for the fraternal unity of all its internal currents, in the spirit of conciliation and responsibility of their eternal leader, José Francisco Peña Gómez.

After two days of sessions, the Committee concludes with this Declaration on the three fundamental issues which were subject of intensive discussions by its members, namely: (i) building an economy with growth, equality and social progress for all; (ii) strengthening and deepening democracy: the new and continuing challenges; and (iii) the return of politics: the fundamental role of political parties.

I. Building an economy with growth, equality and social progress for all

Over the past three decades, Latin America and the Caribbean has succeeded in giving impulse to economic growth, reducing poverty and expanding democracy. However, growth has not been sufficient to eliminate structural poverty in our countries, which is a threat to the sustainability of our democracies.

We agree that to successfully combat poverty we require quality education, the best teachers and technology available, good jobs and opportunities for productive entrepreneurship, an inclusive system of health, that citizens have access to decent housing, with adequate service of clean water, electricity and sanitation. Today's States have to combat inequality, discrimination, exclusion and marginalization. Therefore inclusion, social justice, equity, gender parity and equality of opportunity are essential. Only with true social justice, can we build citizenship and ensure that there are no second-class citizens in our societies. Equality is a guarantee of full citizenship, of governance and of social peace.

To emerge from poverty, competent and ethical leadership is required and this demands a forthright fight against corruption, drug trafficking and organized crime. Full citizenship requires guaranteeing the citizens' fundamental right to security. We must redefine the Social and Democratic State of Law. It is necessary to abandon the idea that the Social State means a large State and that the Liberal State implies one reduced. It is not about building a large State or a smaller one, but to consolidate a State which is more efficient, which is a guarantor, regulator and facilitator. A State that, on the basis of public-private partnerships, develops and manages major infrastructures and essential public services of quality and that are accessible to all.

It is necessary to build a State that encourages the participation of the private sector in development, that only take business initiatives where there is deficiency, but that never surrenders its duty to

regulate the economy and to ensure social benefits and public services of quality for the most needy, be these provided by the State, private or third Sector. Only a State that focuses on its essential public obligations will be equipped to ensure its function as a Social State, and a guarantor of the rights of all.

II. Strengthening and deepening democracy: the new and continuing challenges.

To consolidate the electoral democracy that we have today and prevent the return of authoritarianism, better institutions are necessary. A democracy without the Rule of Law, without solid institutions, without guarantees of the fundamental rights of all, becomes a “democradura”, a democracy without democratic practices, which is the phenomenon that characterizes some current authoritarianisms legitimized through the electoral process.

Therefore, the reform of the State must ensure that it is more democratic and representative, more inclusive, participative and decentralized; a State connected with its citizens, which ensures participation and genuine social representation. We need reforms that make public management transparent and which guarantee the integrity of the administrators of our collective assets. The reform of the State that we propose is, therefore, much more than an administrative process: it is a dynamic redistribution of power and the return of power from the representatives to the citizens.

The new challenge is to become more democratic, decentralized and participative. We need, therefore, executive powers that are not devolved from the old autocratic systems or ‘*caudillismo*’, but which are at the forefront of a new democracy.

A special chapter of these reforms is the equal participation of women. Until we don’t achieve equality between men and women, there will be no effective democracy or full human development in our region.

III. For the return of politics: the fundamental role of political parties

Faced with the emergence of new social actors and new dimensions of civil society, we must rethink the role of political parties as articulators of the popular will. There is a need to establish a development paradigm stemming from a new interaction between civil society organizations and political parties.

We need parties that respect discipline and institutional structures, and that stimulate creative discussion and training. In today's world, we have to put into practice a combination of the principles and values that represent social democracy and the opportunities offered by the new information technologies and communication.

Political parties today are not the only means of political action for citizens who are connected, informed and alert: there are new citizens, and therefore we need parties that are adequate for the new times.

And that purpose requires better leaders. That is why we must devote more time, resources, and energy to the intellectual and political training of our young people. Only with that investment our youth can we have political parties capable of driving the unpostponable fundamental reforms in our States and societies.

Finally, new forms of authoritarianism are perpetuated by the use of State resources in the electoral processes. Hence it is crucial that we have electoral regimes and political party systems that ensure equity and equality of opportunity in electoral contests and, therefore, democratic alternation in power.

RESOLUTION ON VENEZUELA

Original: Spanish

The Socialist International Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean, gathered in the Dominican Republic 9 and 10 May 2014, in light of the serious political, social and economic crisis affecting Venezuela and concerned by the allegations of violations of human rights in recent months,

RESOLVES

- To demand the release of all students and political prisoners, the return of those exiled, and the cessation of political persecution, guaranteeing the life and integrity of all citizens.
- To support the dialogue initiated on 10 April 2014 between the government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and the representatives of the opposition Mesa de Unidad Democrática (MUD), facilitated by the international community through the Apostolic Nuncio, representative of the Vatican and Dean of the diplomatic corps accredited in the country, and the foreign ministers from UNASUR, as agreed by both sides. The Committee also hopes that this dialogue will produce early results so that the political, social and economic situation of Venezuela can be normalized, bearing in mind that since 12 February the country has been subjected to great tensions, protest demonstrations and acts of violence with a deplorable number of dead, wounded and jailed and extensive damage to public and private property.
- To support the creation of an Independent Truth Commission to investigate the events that have taken place since 12 February this year, in cooperation with the United Nations Human Rights Council.
- To support the disarmament of armed groups, as an essential measure for peace.
- To support the renewal, in accordance with the Constitution, of the expired public authorities, which are: the National Electoral Council, the Supreme Court of Justice and the Office of the Comptroller-General of the Republic.

DECLARATION ON HAITI

Original: French

In view of the political crisis which threatens the stability of Haiti, the Socialist International Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean, meeting in the Dominican Republic on 9 and 10 May 2014, calls on the Haitian government to create the conditions necessary for the organization of free, fair and democratic elections at the end of this year.

The Committee encourages all Haitians to pursue dialogue and consensus in order to achieve a credible and acceptable election process.

The Committee reiterates its supports for the Haitian people and the SI member party, the Fusion of Haitian Social Democrats, in their quest for democracy and social justice.

DECLARATION ON CHILE

The Socialist International Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean salutes and celebrates the victory of Michelle Bachelet and the New Majority coalition in Chile. The social democrats gathered in the Dominican Republic with the PRD as hosts, on the 16th anniversary of the death of the distinguished leader José Francisco Peña Gómez, support the measures taken by the Chilean government for a change in the tax system to allow an improvement in the distribution of income and the collection of revenue that will make possible the provision of high quality, free, public education.

Europe For a Europe with our ideals at heart

29 May 2014



The Socialist International, which brings together socialist, social democratic, labour and other progressive parties from all continents, is deeply concerned over the results of the European elections that took place 22-25 May to elect the new members of the European Parliament.

From the perspective of our global movement, serious and disturbing issues have emerged in these elections.

The first issue, the confirmation of the persistent low turnout of voters, which demonstrates the current alienation of the European citizens from the historic EU project of economic and political integration for common progress and peace. Second, the support received in many of these countries, including some of Europe's largest, for nationalist, populist and extreme right forces, is not only contrary to the values Europe has been based on but also threatens to unravel a forward-looking form of regional governance. While the challenges that we all face are of an ever-increasing global nature and demand wider cooperation, those forces are calling for the opposite: a retreat to narrow and nationalist responses; while societies grow ever more diversified and demand both more inclusion and understanding, these nationalist forces stand for the exclusion of those they see as different; while more people are joining together in the search for common responses, conservative forces insist on isolating people and nations to achieve their own progress. And thirdly, the fact that conservatives and centre-right forces secured the largest number of seats, constituting the biggest group in the new European Parliament, despite their responsibility first in the origins of the last financial crisis and later in imposing austerity policies that have led to negative growth, burgeoning unemployment, growing inequality and the erosion of social protection.

Clearly a great number of people do not feel at home in the Europe that we have today. A Europe which appears unable to sustain its economic and social policies as it adapts, in a race to the bottom, to the pressures of global competition; a Europe that seems too ready to accept the overpowering role of the global market rather than fight for the necessary rules and regulations to humanise the global economy; a Europe that seems all the more fearful of the voice of its citizens, their participation, deliberation and decision-making.

Socialism and social democracy have been inextricably linked to the project of a common Europe, to which numerous historical leaders of our movement have contributed. Today, more than at any other time, following these elections and faced with its results, we must emphasise our support and adherence to the

original ideals that have always been the basis of our identification with Europe. For us, Europe is about a common purpose to build a future of opportunities for all of its peoples, through partnership and solidarity to protect democracy, rights and freedoms for all its inhabitants, and through justice and peace contribute to a more secure and fair world. Our movement has the capacity to bring change and the European Union needs to change.

Our movement has always fought in all corners of the world, where our values and principles were under threat. Today these values are under threat in Europe. As socialists and social democrats we need to firmly uphold our views and policies distinct from those of the conservatives. Our commitment to defend the identity of our movement must never be muddled or compromised. We strongly believe that to come out of the crisis in Europe and to face the nationalists and populists, and the conservative forces, we must vigorously pursue the vision of Europe that we have at heart, a Europe that stands together and whose values are undiminished in the eyes of its citizens.

George Papandreou
President

Luis Ayala
Secretary General

Council

SI Council Meeting in Mexico City

30 June-1 July 2014



The first Council meeting of the Socialist International of 2014 took place on 30 June-1 July in Mexico City, hosted by the organisation's two member parties in Mexico, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD). Leaders and representatives from member parties and organisations gathered to discuss the main themes on the agenda of the Council: "Our priorities in the global economy", "Our efforts for peace and the resolution of conflicts", "Our work to strengthen and deepen democracy", and "Defining an SI Charter for migrants".

The Secretary General of the Socialist International, Luis Ayala, welcomed participants and thanked both host parties. Opening the meeting, he referred to the presence throughout Mexico's history of large social movements for justice and freedom. Today our two parties were carrying forward these values, which are shared by and define our global social democratic movement. The meeting was taking place at a time of multiple global challenges – on the economy, democracy, peace in a world of increasing conflicts, and migrations – which the Council would discuss and debate.

Leaders of both host parties delivered introductory speeches at the opening of the meeting and welcomed delegates to Mexico.



César Camacho (PRI) outlined in his address, the virtues of social democracy and the commitment of the PRI to the shared values of the Socialist International, in particular the desire of the government of Mexico to tackle inequality and social injustice. He wished delegates success in their deliberations and work over the two days of the Council and extended a warm and friendly welcome.

In his speech, Jesús Zambrano Grijalva (PRD) referred to the contribution to democracy, stability and governability by the left in Mexico and the goal of a society of rights and social equality. The global left, he added, stood for economic, social and civil rights, in particular women's rights. He reiterated the sense of belonging felt by the PRD in the great family of the Socialist International.

In his opening address, SI President George Papandreou warmly thanked both host parties for their generous hospitality and committed participation in the work of the SI. His speech focused on the issue of growing inequality against which the global social democratic movement had long struggled. To combat this, he added, global governance was necessary to implement rules and regulations restoring the basis of equity and democracy. He announced that a new SI Commission on Equality would be launched this autumn, bringing this crucial issue to the forefront of the global political debate.

Under the first main theme, delegates presented their perspectives on the priorities of the International in the global economy. A number of keynote speeches were delivered, which provided the framework for the interventions to follow. Four key priorities featured heavily in discussions – tackling inequality, battling corruption and financial deregulation, making positive use of big data and protecting the environment – and formed the framework of a declaration on priorities in the global economy later adopted by the Council. A further statement was also adopted in solidarity with Argentina in relation to the restructuring of that country's foreign debt.

During the first day of the meeting, delegates attended a lunch hosted by the Mexican Minister of Foreign Affairs, José Antonio Meade Kuribreña. In a speech to participants attending the Council, he reflected on the role of Mexico in world affairs and the efforts of the government of President Peña Nieto for peace, inclusiveness, education and prosperity. That evening Council participants visited the Academy of San Carlos, where they were hosted and addressed by José Narro Robles, Rector of the largest university in Mexico, the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM).

Contributions to the discussion on the second main theme, “Our efforts for peace and the resolution of conflicts” highlighted the many active conflicts in the world in need of decisive action to bring an end to the death and suffering we are witnessing along with political instability in different regions of the world. A number of speakers conveyed their alarm and condemnation at recent events in Iraq, where widespread acts of terror threaten the very integrity of the state. A declaration on the insurgency in Iraq rejected the creation of an Islamic caliphate and called for a government of national unity with the representation of all the diverse groups within Iraqi society, recognising that the freedoms of all need to be respected. It expressed the solidarity of the SI with its member party in Iraq, the PUK, and with the Kurdish people who are in the front line of the battle against extremist insurgency, urging that the Kurdish people be granted their rightful voice in any discussions on the future of Iraq.

Contributions were also heard from the SI member parties in Ukraine and Russian Federation on the ongoing crisis, underscoring the role played by the SI as a forum for constructive discussions. It was agreed that the SI Committee for the CIS, the Caucasus and the Black Sea would return to the examination of this subject in a meeting to be convened shortly.

The Secretary General announced that preparations were underway, in contact with the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/SPLA) government and the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition (SPLM/A-IO), and representatives of the Ethiopian government who had been heading talks between both, for the visit of an SI delegation to South Sudan to encourage both sides to end hostilities, which are in danger of escalation, leading to further violence and famine. Equally, he reported on contacts made with the President of the Central African Republic, and other political actors in that country, for a Mission of the Socialist International to CAR to engage in discussions on how to contribute to the end of that conflict.

Regarding Western Sahara, the Council recalled the Council resolution on this issue adopted in Cascais, Portugal, and endorsed the proposal of the Secretary General that the mission to the region previously agreed by the SI Mediterranean Committee would be carried out as early as possible and report to the next Council meeting. Should that prove difficult within the timeframe between now and the next Council, then the SI President and Secretary General would undertake such a visit.

A further resolution in support of the peace process in Colombia was adopted by the Council.

The work of the Socialist International on democracy has been a fundamental pillar of the organisation throughout its existence. Contributions on the main theme of "Our work to strengthen and deepen democracy" recognised the historical contribution of the SI in this regard and reflected the deep belief by all its member parties in the need for effective, accountable and functioning democracies. Delegates spoke on democratic successes achieved by SI member parties working in difficult conditions, but also on the severe challenges to democracy faced by many social democrats in countries such as Mauritania, whose leader was a key-note speaker on this subject. Nowhere is the need for true democracy more keenly felt than in the Arab world, and this was reflected in a declaration adopted by the Council.

In regard to the current situation in Venezuela, the Council endorsed the resolution on Venezuela adopted by the Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean at its recent meeting in the Dominican Republic. A declaration on Puerto Rico was also adopted by the Council.

The issue of migrations was the next item on the agenda, and specifically the definition of an SI charter for migrants, a task which the International had undertaken. The subject was introduced by the chair of the SI Migrations Committee, Habib el Malki (Morocco, USFP) who reported on the discussions held at its recent meeting in Tangiers. Further contributions were heard by delegates from countries where the question of migration is particularly significant, such as Mexico and Guatemala, who presented their proposals for key elements that would make up the SI charter and other urgent aspects affecting migrants in their countries.

At the conclusion of the discussions on migrations, the Council adopted a declaration on family reunification, treating the tragic cases of migrant children from Mexico and Central America who have been separated from their families.

The chair of the SI Ethics Committee, Gilles Mahieu (Belgium, PS), reported on the decisions on admission of new members and changes in membership status proposed by the committee. The Council accepted the proposal that the Republican Turkish Party (CTP), Cyprus be upgraded to full membership of the SI. Equally, the Council accepted the proposal for the reinstatement of consultative status for the Social Democratic Party of Azerbaijan (SDPA). Of the new applications for membership, the Council accepted the recommendation of the Ethics Committee to grant consultative status to the People's United Party (PUP) of Belize, the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP), and the People's Harmony Party of Latvia. The Committee's proposal for observer status was accepted by the Council for the National Union for the Development and Renewal (UNDR) of Chad, the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD) and the Swazi Democratic Party (SWADEPA). All decisions are due to be ratified by the next congress, in accordance with the statutes. The Committee would continue its examination of the many other applications for membership which are outstanding and agreed to re-convene for a one-day meeting in London in the autumn of this year.

Maurice Poler, co-chair of the Finance and Administration Committee, SIFAC, (Venezuela, AD) reported on the current financial position of the organisation, the audited accounts for 2013 and the discussions and

decisions of the Committee. Proposals were made for sanctions to be taken against member parties with outstanding membership fees. Parties that have not paid membership fees for three or more years due to financial difficulties will be given the opportunity to enter into a payment agreement. Those that do not make this commitment will be informed that they will cease to be members of the Socialist International at the next Council meeting. The report of the committee was accepted by the Council, which also adopted the audited accounts of the SI for 2013.

The Secretary General, reporting briefly on the activities of the organisation since the last Council meeting in Istanbul, said that despite the financial constraints of the past year due to the late or non-payment of membership fees, the International had managed to continue with an intense programme of activities thanks to the enthusiasm and commitment of so many in our movement. This had been reflected in different parts of the world where the SI has been present, in the regional meetings of our International, in our presence in places of conflict, at meetings of our member parties, in our thematic and statutory committees, meetings of parliamentarians, election observation, and other initiatives organised by our International. Close to thirty different activities had been carried out globally since our last Council, following on from the sixty carried out during the previous year.

Concluding the meeting, the President thanked all delegates for their constructive participation and the common agreements reached. The SI was well placed, as our history has shown, to bring parties together and create dialogue where others couldn't because we share common values. He recalled the words of the rector of UNAM the day before, in that our generation, both the young and the old, have an enormous responsibility to humanity because the challenges we face today have no historical precedence. Paradoxically, we have the means, resources, know-how and human capacity to resolve these problems but it required political decisions and practicing real democracy. This depended on all of us individually and collectively and in the SI we are committed to continue working together to achieve our shared goals. On behalf of all participants, he sincerely thanked the host parties for their warm welcome and for providing the conditions for an excellent meeting.

Middle East

SI calls for immediate ceasefire in the ongoing crisis in Gaza

14 July 2014

The Socialist International, deeply concerned about the ongoing crisis in Gaza and the increasing civilian death toll, urges both Israeli and Palestinian leaders to immediately de-escalate the crisis, to restore calm and re-establish the ceasefire of November 2012, as called for by the Security Council of the United Nations on 12 July.

The respect for humanitarian law, and in particular the protection of civilians, is fundamental, as the loss of life and the suffering that the world has witnessed in the past days is totally unacceptable.

As the Socialist International has stated on numerous occasions, lasting peace and stability in the region will only be possible through the existence of a Palestinian state living side by side with the State of Israel, both within mutually recognised and respected borders.

The launching of rockets from Gaza, where the people are forced to live in unbearable conditions, into Israel and the devastating bombing of the city of Gaza by the Israeli army are utterly deplorable. These attacks only serve to extend the suffering and loss of life, they lead to more violence, and make peace more distant.

The urgent resumption of negotiations to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict cannot be postponed any longer. It is the only way forward and in this regard the international community has a special responsibility.

Middle East

Socialist International condemns shelling of refugee shelter in Gaza

24 July 2014

The Socialist International condemns unreservedly the assault by the Israeli Defence Force against a school used by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) as a shelter in northern Gaza harbouring refugees, mostly women and children, killing at least fifteen and leaving hundreds injured. Reports from UNRWA officials highlight that great efforts had been made to secure a window so that civilians could evacuate to safety but these efforts were to no avail.

For over seven years the citizens of Gaza have had to endure hardship and suffering brought about by Israel's blockade of the enclave. The Socialist International has seen this action as inhumane and counter-productive. It deplores the Israeli government's disregard for international humanitarian law by practicing what is in effect a collective punishment of Palestinian civilians along with the destruction of their basic infrastructure. This situation has become more acute today with thousands of Gaza citizens in urgent need of medical supplies, with over one hundred thousand people seeking refuge with nowhere to go, and with a serious shortage of water and food.

The Socialist International reiterates its appeal made on 14 July for an immediate cease-fire. It further calls on the Israeli government, in the interest of peace and security, to address the underlying causes of the conflict and to engage in negotiations with the Palestinian government to reach a two-State solution, which is the only outcome possible to achieve the lasting peace and stability which all the peoples of the region so urgently need and deserve.

Committee for the CIS, the Caucasus and the Black Sea

Ukrainian conflict at the centre of discussions in Astana

15-16 September 2014



The Socialist International Committee for the CIS, the Caucasus and the Black Sea met on 15-16 September 2014 in Astana, Kazakhstan, hosted by its member party in that country, the Nationwide Social Democratic Party (OSDP). The agenda of the meeting consisted of three main themes: overcoming conflicts and securing peace in the region; the social democratic contribution; the role of our movement in advancing democracy and its institutions in the CIS, Caucasus and Black Sea region; and achieving openness, inclusiveness and solidarity in countries of the region – a cornerstone of the social democratic agenda.

A warm welcome was extended to participants by Zharmakhan Tuyakbai, chair of the OSDP, who noted that this was the second time the committee had gathered in his country, following on from the meeting in Almaty in 2011. Astana, he remarked, was a prosperous city, but this prosperity had not yet spread to

citizens in the rest of the country. The OSDP was working for justice and democracy in Kazakhstan. Reflecting on the agenda of the meeting, he expressed his hope that the committee could find mutual understanding, in line with the fundamental objective of the SI to minimise conflict and suffering, and its tradition of open, fraternal discussions and consensus-based agreements.

The Secretary General of the Socialist International, Luis Ayala, emphasised the importance of the discussions that the committee would hold over the two days of its meeting. Recent months had seen increased conflict in the world, and as a democratic organisation we needed to approach these conflicts on the basis of the experience and views of our member parties in the different regions of the world. He stressed the social democratic commitment to peace as a prerequisite for well-being and progress, and the need for political rather than military solutions to ongoing conflicts. He also expressed gratitude to the host party for their fraternal welcome and preparations for the meeting, wishes which were echoed by all participants.

Discussions on the theme of overcoming conflicts centred on recent events in Ukraine, particularly in the eastern regions of that country.

Dismay was expressed at the return to an era of hot wars with high numbers of casualties, describing the struggle for social justice of Maidan that had mutated into an external conflict. There was a need for respect for the territory of Ukraine, and the Ukrainian representative highlighted that there was a great willingness among the people to defend their land. The search for peace was fundamental, in conjunction with respect for human rights and national borders. Doubts were expressed over the effectiveness of the fragile ceasefire in the country and whether it would merely be a pause before the resumption of violence.

Delegates from the SI member party in Russia underlined the tragedy of people that have lived side by side taking up arms against each other. They called for an end to bombing in civilian areas and cities and the establishment of provisions for humanitarian aid to reach the affected regions. They highlighted the grievances of many citizens living in the affected areas of Donetsk and Lugansk towards the Kiev government, and considered out of place recent statements and plans by leaders of NATO countries in relation to the conflict. In line with the social democratic principles of the SI, they were committed and looking forward to a peaceful resolution to the crisis.

Further interventions highlighted that in situations such as the conflict in Ukraine, it was difficult to distinguish between fact and propaganda. Despite differences in their interpretations of the fighting and actors involved, both the Ukrainian and Russian delegations, along with the entirety of those present, agreed that for the Socialist International the first priority must be to promote peace and an end to the loss of civilian life. The citizens of Ukraine are the ones that have suffered, having firstly been failed by successive governments and lately enduring the consequences of the conflict that have been felt by people across the country, but particularly in the affected regions. Members of delegations from other countries present brought their own experiences to the discussions, and were agreed that in the effort to find common ground including in a meeting such as this between colleagues, the SI had its role to play in taking a fresh approach to the crisis independent from the actors involved in the conflict, both internal and external, with the principles of our organisation at the forefront.

Following comprehensive discussions, conducted in a spirit of honesty and openness but also of mutual respect and fraternalism, the viewpoints of all those present were taken into account in a declaration on the conflict in Ukraine adopted by the committee at the close of the meeting, outlining its position in favour of the peaceful resolution of this conflict and proposals resulting from the agreements reached by participants.

Reports presented by delegates on the national situation in their respective countries related strongly to the agenda themes of democracy and solidarity. With regard to the host country, this primarily concerned the search for space for an effective social-democratic political force in Kazakhstan. It was felt therefore, by the members of the committee, that it was important that the party participate in the SI and its activities as a reflection of the commitment of Kazaks to the values and principles of the International.

With regard to the SI member party in Russia, it had enjoyed some electoral success, while it continued to work to strengthen the democratic process to overcome reported shortcomings.

In Armenia, there has been a mobilisation of civil society and youth groups, but that has not manifested itself in a party political way. Within the parliament, the SI member ARF-D was seeking cooperation with other opposition groups on issues of common concern.

In Azerbaijan, the party had re-established its relations with the Socialist International, in accordance with the decisions of the last Council, and was playing once more an active role in the work of the Committee, a fact that had been reflected in public opinion in the country.

The committee heard that growing authoritarianism was regrettably a feature of political life in Tajikistan, where the opposition has no leaders due to the systematic removal of official and unofficial opposition parties, under the pretence that it is fighting terrorism. Amendments to the constitution in 1999 and 2003 reduced democratic space in the country, and a state of total authoritarianism was now in existence.

Before closing, an overview of the discussions was made, pointing to the different experiences and examples with regard to the struggles of social democrats around the world to advance and consolidate political democracy, economic development with fairness, and social change. These objectives remained the fundamental commitments of the member parties of the International in the CIS, the Caucasus and the Black Sea region.

Ukraine

Conflict in Ukraine

16 September 2014

The Socialist International Committee for the CIS, the Caucasus and the Black Sea, meeting in Astana, Kazakhstan on 15-16 September 2014, addressed the issue of overcoming conflicts and securing peace in the region, paying particular attention to the current conflict in Ukraine. With the participation of its member parties from Ukraine and the Russian Federation, along with social democratic parties from other countries of the region, the committee discussed and agreed upon the need for a swift end to the conflict, and issued the following declaration.

Social democracy has its roots as a movement for peace, and the Committee reaffirms that peace is a fundamental precondition for human progress and prosperity. The future of social democracy in the CIS region and elsewhere is dependent on the prevalence of peace. Military confrontation and the destruction of life is the opposite of all that this movement stands for. The Committee affirms that it is a high priority to reassess the causes of this conflict, and examine the way in which movements such as the Socialist International can contribute to bringing and end to open conflicts around us.

In Ukraine, as everywhere in the world, political considerations must prevail over military might. All sides need to recognise that peace is a result of a human commitment to resolve differences by non-military means rather than building a façade of peace based on balances of military strength and mutual threats of destruction, as was the case in the past. Such a peace requires great courage, identifying the real reasons for confrontation and the ways in which such grievances can be overcome, using compromise and negotiation to avoid loss of life and destruction.

A vital contribution of social democracy in this regard is to advance in its fundamental task of establishing modern, open and democratic nation states, continuing the historic role of social democrats as state builders.

In reaffirming the norms and principles upon which peace is based, and the new international order we have been building at the global level over the last two decades, we need to get back onto the track of regional cooperation that had been advanced in recent years, built on mutual interests and interaction. New opportunities are today open to each of the independent countries of the CIS, Caucasus and the Black Sea, both within this region and globally, as each of these states has established itself within the international

community of nations. A precondition for this, here as in any part of the globe, is the respect of the territorial integrity of every country and good neighbourly relations.

The deaths of more than 3,000 people in Ukraine as a direct result of the armed conflict are a tragedy. The most immediate and pressing priority is that the ceasefire agreed in Minsk earlier this month between the parties to the conflict be upheld. Further, in our view, the other points of the agreement need to be implemented as soon as possible, with an inclusive national dialogue of particular importance, as it is the only way in which an ultimate end to the violence and long-term peace will be achieved. The recently introduced proposal to grant greater autonomy for some regions in southeast Ukraine together with the use of Russian language in public and private life and in education is an example of the kind of initiative that will be required.

In our view, the role of all outside powers and the international community in regard to the conflict must be guided by the goal of its peaceful and swift resolution, encouraging the parties to enter negotiations and contributing to bringing about a definitive settlement of the disputes between them.

It should be recognised that at the centre of the conflict are the Ukrainians, placed on different sides of the argument, but who are all bearing its consequences, in every part of the country. The establishment of humanitarian corridors under international observation, to deliver aid, food and medical supplies to all those who are in need of assistance in Ukraine, is an urgently necessary step to alleviate the human suffering in the country.

The resolution of the conflict in Ukraine is paramount for the citizens of that country, as it is integral to restoring the basis upon which peace and stability in the region rest. The Socialist International will therefore continue to be seized of this matter and remain in dialogue with its member parties in the region.

Presidium

Meeting of the SI Presidium and Heads of State and Government, United Nations, New York

25 September 2014



On the occasion of the 69th session of the United Nations General Assembly, members of the Presidium of the Socialist International and Heads of State and Government gathered for a meeting on 25 September 2014 at the UN headquarters. The main themes of the discussions were the contribution of our movement to peace and international security in face of today's open conflicts; our agenda on equality in the global economy and the establishment of an SI Commission on this theme; and defining a way forward to secure the 2015 global agreements on climate change.

The Heads of State and Government and other officials present included HE President Alpha Condé (Guinea), HE President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita (Mali), HE President Mahamadou Issoufou (Niger, SI Honorary President), HE President Jacob Zuma (South Africa, SI Vice-President), Prime Minister Elio Di Rupo (Belgium, SI Vice-President), Prime Minister Victor Ponta (Romania, SI Vice-President), former

President of Finland, Tarja Halonen (SI Honorary President), José Miguel Insulza (Secretary General of the Organization of American States), Zlatko Lagumdžija (Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bosnia & Herzegovina), Igor Lukšić (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Montenegro), Arnold Nicholson (Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, Jamaica), Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Namibia), Maite Nkoana-Mashabane (Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, South Africa), Ahmad Bamarni (Government of Iraq, Responsible for international organisations) and Majdi Khaldi (Representative of President Abbas, Palestine).

The meeting was chaired by SI President George Papandreou, with participating members of the Presidium comprising SI Secretary General Luis Ayala, and SI Vice-Presidents Victor Benoit (Haiti), Ahmed Ould Daddah (Mauritania), Ousmane Tanor Dieng (Senegal), Marcelo Ebrard Casaubón (Mexico PRD), Emmanuel Golou (Benin), Alfred Gusenbauer (former Chancellor of Austria), Chantal Kambiwa (Cameroon), Mario Nalpatian (Armenia), Julião Mateus Paulo (Angola), Henry Ramos (Venezuela), Sukhbaatar Batbold (former Prime Minister of Mongolia), Miguel Vargas Maldonado (Dominican Republic), and from the SI fraternal organisations, Ouafa Hajji (SIW President) and Felipe Jeldres (IUSY President).

The need for decisive action by the international community in the face of open conflicts emerged as a strong message during discussions on the first theme of the meeting. The threat posed by terrorist organisations such as ISIS, Boko Haram or Al Qaeda affects not only the countries in which they are based and operate, but also security on a global level. Participants heard how instability in Libya, for example, had led to deterioration in security in Niger and Mali. The exchanges between participants on the most recent developments in Iraq and Syria reflected a strong and unequivocal stance against the brutal and abhorrent acts of murder committed by terrorists in those countries, as declared previously by the SI at its last Council meeting. The values of humanity and civilisation are threatened by terrorism, and it is imperative that concerted efforts are made to protect innocents in Iraq, Syria and beyond from the terrorist menace and prevent its further spread. An important perspective from within the country on the specific threats faced by Iraq was presented by Ahmad Bamarni, on behalf of the Iraqi government. A specific statement on ending terror in Iraq and Syria was issued following the meeting.

Participants endorsed the recent declaration on the conflict in Ukraine adopted by the SI Committee for the CIS, the Caucasus and the Black Sea at its recent meeting in Kazakhstan, which was an example of the ability of the SI to bring together its member parties in a spirit of honest discussion in the search for principle based agreements.

There was equally a consensus on the need for social democrats to continue with their strong commitment on resolution of conflicts, peace-building and reform of global governance, questions that are vital to improving security in an interdependent world. One such example is the need to continue the search for regional peace, as in the Middle East following the grave crisis in Gaza, in the Sahel, central Africa and elsewhere.

The spread of Ebola was acknowledged as a major threat to human life and international security for which collective responsibility needed to be taken. The meeting heard from His Excellency Alpha Condé, President of Guinea, on the impact on his country, one of the most affected by the outbreak, and called for support from the international community to find a cure for the disease and to ensure that the economic impact on the countries struck by the outbreak was minimised, as this has the potential to be as devastating as the disease itself.

The importance of equality in the global economy was strongly underlined during interventions on this theme. There is a crucial need for the SI to continue its work on this subject and to ensure that this remains a priority, despite the multitude of other pressing issues facing the international community. The meeting therefore strongly endorsed the creation of a Socialist International Commission on Equality, to be composed of senior political figures with a strong track record on the issue, and an advisory body composed of academics. The Commission, whose members are drawn from all continents, will be chaired by Elio Di Rupo, Prime Minister of Belgium, a Vice-President of the SI, and will report to the next Congress of the International in 2016. The members of this Commission, agreed by the meeting, will be announced once all those proposed have accepted.

The Socialist International has also been a firm advocate of gender equality and attendees welcomed the new 'He for She' global solidarity movement for gender equality.

Those who intervened during the discussions on the third theme of the meeting referred to the grave effects that climate change was already having in their respective countries, and its relationship to security and human development. There was a strong consensus that this issue needed to remain at the forefront of the global agenda, in particular as climate action is fundamentally linked to development and security. An equitable and just solution to climate change will also bring progress towards greater security and equality in the world. The discussion on climate change was introduced by Teresa Ribera, Director of the Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations (IDDRI), who summarised the challenges that needed to be faced in the lead up to the 2015 climate conference in Paris to secure substantial agreement. There was some optimism that the UN Climate Summit on 23 September, attended by a number of those present, had created momentum behind the quest for a durable accord.

The substance of the interventions from Heads of State and Government, ministers and members of the Presidium alike, underlined the importance of the interconnection between the three themes of the meeting. Peace and security, equality in the global economy and climate justice are central to the identity of social democracy today.

The meeting further concluded that there is a need to adapt the United Nations, and in particular its Security Council, to adequately deal with the multiple challenges the world faces today. This remains a crucial task, to which the Socialist International is committed to contribute.

Iraq and Syria

Ending Terror in Iraq and Syria

25 September 2014

From the seat of the United Nations, where the international community has come together to stand against terror, the Presidium recalled the declaration of the SI Council in Mexico City on 30 June-1 July 2014 on the insurgency in Iraq, which condemned the acts of the terrorist group Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). The attacks perpetrated by ISIS have increased in their barbarism and the group now operates with disregard for national borders across areas of northern Iraq and Syria.

The whole of humanity must take a stand against the senseless murder committed by terrorists. There is a need for action in defence of life, the values of humanity and civilisation. These values are threatened by ISIS terrorism, and it is imperative that concerted efforts are made to protect innocents in Iraq, Syria and beyond from the terrorist menace and prevent its further spread.

The Socialist International fully supports the government and people of Iraq as they work to strengthen and consolidate open, inclusive and democratic institutions in that country. Furthermore, we extend our solidarity to Iraqis from all religious and ethnic groups, who have bravely taken a stand against terror in their country.

The Socialist International recognises the steps taken by members of the international community in offering support and assistance to the Iraqi people, and calls on the entire community to join in this cause. In this regard, the adoption of a UN Security Council resolution to prevent the flow of foreign terrorist fighters is a positive development.

We also reiterate the declaration of the SI Council for the need to resolve the conflict in Syria, removing the power vacuum within which terrorist organisations are able to freely operate. The Socialist International remains fully committed on the side of those who wish to bring democracy and peace to Syria, with respect for the rights and freedoms of all.

IPU

SI at the 131st Assembly of the IPU

12-16 October 2014



The Socialist International attended the 131st Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union held in Geneva from 12 to 16 October 2014. During the event, the SI held its regular meeting of Parliamentarians present at the Assembly from SI member parties and invited guests.

On this occasion, the SI meeting was attended by parliamentarians and representatives from Angola, Bosnia, Cape Verde, Costa

Rica, Cyprus, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Guinea Bissau, Haiti, Iraq, Mali, Malta, Namibia, Niger, Pakistan, Palestine, Peru, Spain, South Africa, United Kingdom, Venezuela, Western Sahara, the Global Fund (to fight AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria), the Latin American Parliament, and the PNND (Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament). The meeting was chaired by the SI Secretary General, Luis Ayala.

The meeting began with a special moment of appreciation for the outgoing President of the IPU, Abdulwahad Radi, who had been invited to join the gathering for its opening. The chair conveyed on behalf of all participants and of our movement, gratitude and recognition for his successful work as President of the IPU. Radi thanked all participants for their cooperation during his tenure at the head of the organisation.

The discussions of the meeting included an exchange of views on the main themes to be addressed by the 131st Assembly, the election of the new President of the IPU, an overview of current international threats to peace and security and the contribution of social democracy to overcoming them, as well as reports by members on particular issues of national concern.

On the first theme of the agenda, several participants expressed their disappointment at the final choice of the emergency item on the IPU's agenda. While sharing the concern over Ebola as a major global issue, it was pointed out that this was a subject on which there was a great deal of consensus, whereas the more contentious matter of terrorism had been rejected by the Assembly. The delegation from Iraq in particular was disappointed not to have the opportunity to explain what was going on in their country vis-à-vis ISIS. Others expressed concern that at these assemblies of the IPU there was a growing tendency to avoid discussion on the most sensitive issues, recalling how it had been impossible at the previous meeting to include a debate on Ukraine and this time there was to be no discussion on Syria, Iraq or Palestine. The SI Secretary General proposed to issue a statement on terrorism following this meeting, which would be based on previous statements made by the SI Council and Presidium, with the added element of Kobane and the Kurds' courageous struggle to defend it.

The importance of the ideological dimension of these SI meetings was once again highlighted and welcomed, considering that in the IPU geographical interests tended to predominate. It was also hoped that SI statements at IPU meetings could contribute to shaping national policies by parliamentarians in their respective countries.

An exchange of views was held on the election of the new President of the IPU, during which a broad range

of opinions were expressed on the different candidates, some based on gender, others on agreements by geo-political groups, and others on political considerations.

In the report on the situation in Iraq, the meeting heard of the dire situation on the ground and the effect it was having on the citizens, particularly on the minorities who were suffering the brutality of ISIS with no hope. There had been very little humanitarian help and the central government had still not passed the federal budget. Mosul, the second largest city after Bagdad, was totally occupied by ISIS and that being the only direct access to the border with Syria. The town of Ramadi, which was their only border with Jordan, was at that moment approximately 80% under the control of ISIS, whose forces were now only 20 kms away from Bagdad. International help was needed, however, it was reported that there was a lack of understanding surrounding the plan of the coalition bombing.

Concerning the Sahel, it was underlined that the situation in Libya was crucial to the stability of the whole of the Sahel and all in the international community needed to take this on board. It was highlighted that Libya had become a sanctuary for drug trafficking and the border region between Niger and Nigeria a safe haven for Boko Haram. Blame was placed on the West for creating the present crisis in Libya and action was needed against the drug traffickers and the fictional state that some people were trying to set up there. In regard to the situation in the north of Mali, it was also pointed out that not all Tuaregs were involved with the MNLA and in their struggle with the situation in the North, the support of the Socialist International for the government in Bamako was very important.

The Palestinian delegates reported on the situation in Gaza. Every effort was being made for the unity government to work and to benefit the Palestinian people. In this sense, despite efforts by a number of countries in the region to hinder that process, they had also succeeded in forming a delegation containing all factions to negotiate a ceasefire with Israel. It was underlined that the key problem to solve was the occupation itself, without which there could be no peace. They appealed for efforts by the international community towards a timetable to end the occupation which was also seen as the root and cause of terrorism. Recent developments in some EU countries in favour of recognising the Palestinian state was welcomed as a step towards increasing the number of 134 countries which have already done so.

The meeting also heard how Malta continued to be affected by the flow of migrants in the Mediterranean Sea, something it was stressed was an international issue and therefore needed to be addressed internationally. Malta's proximity to Libya was also highlighted and concern expressed over the fact that while there was much talk of ISIS in Iraq and Syria, the instability in Libya also made it vulnerable to extremists.

A contribution was also heard from the youngest participant in the IPU Assembly, a member of the Namibian youth league, who pointed to the fact that too often young people were being used as scapegoats by both governments and terrorist groups. It was highlighted that the protection of young people was taking second place to political interests, and greater priority should be given to tackle sex trafficking and the exploitation of minors. The importance of states ensuring military and intelligence services was also underlined, as militarily weak states were vulnerable to terrorist attacks.

Concluding the meeting, the SI Secretary General said that as socialists and progressives we stood for rights and freedoms, without which there would always be conflict. We also stood for peace and for resisting and overcoming terror wherever it occurred. Referring to the question of migrations, he said we were all part of the same world economy and this was an illustration of how issues could not be tackled in isolation and our International would continue to bring together parties from all continents to jointly address the major challenges we faced.

Iraq and Syria

Latest developments in Iraq and Syria

15 October 2014

The latest developments in Iraq and Syria continue to demonstrate that the terror carried out by ISIS is a major threat to international peace and security, to the people in the region and to the world at large, which must urgently be brought to an end.

We reiterate the previous calls of the Socialist International for the international community to unite in response to this terror and to act in defence of the innocent populations of Iraq and Syria, and in support of those from all ethnic and religious groups affected. We share the solidarity previously expressed by our International with the SI member party in Iraq, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), as we do with the Kurdistan Regional Government headed by Masoud Barzani and with all the Kurdish people who are courageously standing up against terror, epitomised today by their brave and steadfast defence of the city of Kobane in northern Syria.

The threat posed by terrorist fighters is of grave concern and all efforts must be made to provide the international assistance required in order that their advance anywhere can be halted and reversed.

It is equally important to support the government of Iraq as it works to strengthen and consolidate the institutions of democracy in an inclusive and open manner, and all those in Syria striving for democracy, freedoms and rights.

Burkina Faso

Call for constitutional order in Burkina Faso

31 October 2014

The Socialist International welcomes the decision by President Blaise Compaoré to step down from the Presidency, thus averting a deepening of the crisis in Burkina Faso. Yesterday our International had deplored the actions of President Compaoré in shutting down the government, dissolving parliament, imposing a state of emergency and announcing the creation of a transitional government to serve for the next twelve months, actions which led to increased violence on the streets of the capital, Ouagadougou, and the abhorrent attack on the National Assembly and on parliamentarians.

The International calls for the prompt restoration of constitutional rule and measures to ensure that early elections are held, allowing democracy to be respected.

Venezuela

Socialist International envoys prevented from visiting Leopoldo López in prison in Venezuela

15 November 2014

José Antonio Viera-Gallo, a prominent Chilean lawyer and socialist, with broad experience in public service in his country, where he has served as a parliamentarian, Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies, Senator, Minister Secretary General of the Presidency, as well as Minister of the Constitutional Tribunal of the Republic of Chile, accompanied by the lawyer, Professor of Law at the University of Chile and collaborator of the Socialist International Secretariat, Claudio Herrera, are in Caracas from 13 to 16 November as representatives of the SI to gain information about the circumstances under which the leader of the *Voluntad Popular* party, Leopoldo López, continues to be imprisoned along with numerous other political prisoners, and to make representations for their early release.

Today, 15 November, the SI representatives tried to visit Leopoldo López, who has already spent nine months under arbitrary detention in the Military Prison of Ramo Verde. The envoys were accompanied by the wife and parents of the detained politician.

The prison authorities denied them access under the pretext that Leopoldo López was affected by a disciplinary measure that prevented him from receiving visitors because he, together with the other political prisoners, had hit their cell bars with their cutlery in protest at the lack of resolution by the judge assigned to their case to respond to the request for freedom made by the UN Special Group on Arbitrary Detention.

While access was being requested, Leopoldo López and his comrades lifted a written sign between the bars of their cells regarding their imprisonment and exchanged greetings with their families, highlighting the infringement of their rights. In reply, the guards sounded the siren of a military vehicle to silence their voices, provoking a deafening noise.

Faced with the impossibility of entering the prison, the SI special envoy José Antonio Viera-Gallo, declared the following to the members of the media who were present:

“Irrespective of the political situation in Venezuela, the SI has sent this mission to learn first-hand about the detention of Leopoldo López, which was qualified as arbitrary by the United Nations Special Group, calling on the Venezuelan authorities to release him”.

He regretted the decision of the court judge to deny the United Nations’ request for his release, and the impossibility of making direct contact with Leopoldo López. He also pointed out that this situation is a serious violation of human rights. “There is no reason whatsoever to keep Leopoldo López in prison. The charges against him have no legal basis. Neither are there any motives to justify the refusal of visitors”.

Viera-Gallo said that it would have been desirable to have been able to express the views of the SI directly to the authorities of the Venezuelan Government, for which numerous attempts were made at the highest level without any reply.

In addition, during their visit to Caracas the mission held meetings with the SI member parties, representatives of the *Mesa de Unidad Democrática*, the Venezuelan Episcopal Conference and other relevant actors in the public life of the country.

All these developments will be reported to the world Council of the Socialist International which will meet on 12-13 December in Geneva.

Latin America and the Caribbean

Meeting of the SI Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean at the OAS, Washington DC

1-2 December 2014



Patricia Leiva, OEA

The Socialist International Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean met in the headquarters of the Organisation of American States (OAS) in Washington DC, on 1-2 December 2014.



José Miguel Insulza, SG of the Organization of American States

At the opening of the meeting, OAS Secretary General, José Miguel Insulza, welcomed the participants and the presence of the regional member parties of the Socialist International in the Hall of the Americas. He highlighted the full validity of the principles of the Socialist International, which promote the creation of societies with greater social inclusion, democracy and respect for human rights. He recalled that the OAS as well as the SI are institutions with a long history, but their current history began in the post-war era, one in 1948 and the other in 1951. He also said as an example, that the current issues of concern for the OAS and the SI “are not that different”, pointing out that the aims of both organisations are to achieve more equal societies. “Like the International, the OAS shares the objectives of an

inclusive society with more solidarity, and encourages policies to support growth with employment and greater equality. The OAS looks to strengthening and deepening democracy and promotes the existence of open and transparent governments closer to their citizens”, he stressed. Finally, Secretary General Insulza recalled that he has supported the cause of socialism since his youth and reaffirmed the validity of these ideas when facing the current challenges in the region and in the world.

Also addressing the meeting during the opening, the Chair of the Committee, Miguel Vargas Maldonado (PRD, Dominican Republic), reviewed the themes to be discussed during the two days and presented his views on them. Vargas pointed out that the main challenge faced by the region in the current scenario of a slowing-down of the economy, is not only how to recover the pace of growth but how to achieve better growth, that is, how to decrease the inequalities in our societies and create opportunities for all. Referring

to the challenges faced today by the democracies of Latin America and the Caribbean, Miguel Vargas underlined the importance of having more transparent government, closer to the people, open to citizens participation, within an environment of respect for legal order and rule of law.



Closing the opening session, the Secretary General of the Socialist International, Luis Ayala, highlighted the role of organisations such as the OAS and the SI, in the world that emerged after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, and particularly their commitment to democracy. He expressed satisfaction at holding a Committee meeting in the headquarters of the OAS for the first time. The hope of building a multipolar world was frozen during the period of the Cold War, but after it reached its end, new opportunities and new challenges had emerged for institutions like the OAS, with a leadership like that of Secretary General Insulza which has given a new stimulus to the organisation.

The same can be seen in other regions of the world, he added. In Africa, through its own regional organisations like the African Union, they are taking on new rules and commitments centred on democracy. Regarding Asia, Ayala spoke of his recent participation in India in the homage offered by the Congress Party to Jawaharlal Nehru, and about the similarity of principles and objectives between that political party of the largest democracy in the world and the Socialist International. He highlighted the fact that it was not the market that was responsible for the fall of the Berlin Wall a quarter of a century ago, but the demands of the people for freedom and democracy. In Latin America and the Caribbean, he recalled the key role of social democrats during the transitions from dictatorships to democracy during the 80s and 90s, and he pointed out that the current agenda of the SI is based on respect for this democracy and on policies of consolidation of freedoms and social inclusion. In places where there exist threats or tensions, the SI has been present, sending missions or carrying out activities. The most recent example was the mission sent to Venezuela, the report on which will be presented to the next World Council in Geneva. He concluded by highlighting the commitment of the SI to the struggle against inequality whose more concrete expression has been the creation of the SI Commission on Equality, and the global efforts to reverse global warming and climate change.

During the working sessions of the Committee, interventions were heard from among others, the Vice-Chair of the Committee Elsa Espinosa (PRI, Mexico), the Vice-President of the Socialist International Victor Benoit (Fusion SD, Haiti), Francisco Rosales (FSLN, Nicaragua), Marcelo Stubrin (UCR, Argentina), Carlos Vecchio (VP, Venezuela), Gerardo Villanueva (PLN, Costa Rica), Carme Chacón (PSOE, Spain), Rafael Filizzola (PDP, Paraguay), Timoteo Zambrano (UNT, Venezuela), Edmonde Supplice (Fusion SD, Haiti), Margarita Zapata (FSLN, Nicaragua), Félix Santana (PRD, Dominican Republic); Robert Pickersgill (PNP, Jamaica), Giovanni Atalita (MAN, Curaçao), Julio Palacios (PRD, Panama), Jorge Farfán (PAP, Peru), Diva Gastelum (SIW); all of whom reflected on the current economic situation in the region and the challenges faced by democracy today in Latin America and the Caribbean. The agreements on the main points were discussed during the two days and are included in the Declaration of the Committee adopted at the end of the meeting.

Furthermore, during the meeting, the representatives of the political parties present reported on the situations in their respective countries. The representative of the PSOE, Carme Chacón, shared with the Committee her assessment of the current situation in Spain.

In closing the meeting, the Chair of the Committee Miguel Vargas thanked once again the participation of the member parties, underlining the importance of having met ten days before the World Council of the SI, which will allow them to report to the Council in Geneva on the achievements and challenges of the progressive political forces in Latin America and the Caribbean.

DECLARATION

Original: Spanish

The Socialist International Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean, meeting at the headquarters of the Organisation of American States (OAS) in Washington DC, on 1-2 December 2014, declares:

I.- Its satisfaction at the holding of this meeting in the headquarters of the Organisation of American States, an organisation that, since its creation in 1948, has worked to promote peace, democracy, justice and security in the countries of the region, calling upon the nations of the region to maintain their commitment to and compliance with international order and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

II.- Regarding international and regional economic developments of recent months, the Committee expresses its concern at the slowdown of the economy in several Latin American and Caribbean countries, a situation that could lead to a particularly difficult situation due to the fall in prices of some raw materials which are of vital importance to some of the economies of the region.

The Committee highlights the fact that the economic policies adopted by Latin American and Caribbean states in order to strengthen their economies and give them new impetus must always be oriented towards growth for their peoples, a growth that will foster the creation of new and better employment, lead to productive investments, and that maintains and improves social policies to reduce inequality by means of a fair system of taxation and that creates the conditions for greater social and environmental justice in the countries of the region.

The Committee declares its rejection of the adjustment policies which, through cutting expenditure attempt to solve public deficits with a high social cost. The improvement of the current economic conditions in the region calls for decisive action by the States, as well as more public-private alliances and gaining the trust of their citizens.

The Socialist International Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean reiterates its commitment to policies that promote the building of societies that are more cohesive and inclusive.

As a particular action in terms of the economy, the Committee encourages in countries of the region and beyond, the adoption of the following measures against tax havens:

The Committee expresses its commitment to combat tax evasion, both by citizens in their own countries as well as by foreign individuals and companies, by not harbouring the accounts of citizens and corporations of other countries that are looking to evade their tax obligations.

To promote national legislation and adequate international agreements to eradicate fiscal opacity wherever necessary, and to guarantee transparency so that the automatic and obligatory exchange of fiscal information among countries becomes common place.

The Committee urges the strengthening of efforts by the OECD to produce a 'black list' of tax havens worldwide, so that each country may be able to suspend or cancel double taxation agreements in the regions where these exist; and to prevent access to tenders and government assistance to companies domiciled in nations included on the list.

III.- Concerning the strengthening and deepening of democracy with open, transparent governments closer to their citizens, the Committee points out that, considering that the years of darkness and dictatorships have been overcome, democracy is today widespread and present in the region. It is a political system that, in spite of its strength, it is under great stress to achieve its true objectives.

Sometimes, legitimately elected governments find it difficult to ensure that their citizens have access to goods and services which are essential to satisfy their basic needs in matters of employment, housing, health and education.

At the same time, the Committee observes that in some countries of the region constitutional reforms

have been implemented to allow the successive and unlimited re-election of their authorities. These changes to the rules of the presidential system have drawn criticism in the region, given that they may lead to abuses of public resources to ensure the continuity in power of the ruling authority, thus hindering the emergence of new leaders and preventing a truly fair democratic contest.

Furthermore, the Committee underlines that the independence and autonomy of the jurisdictional and electoral organs in the region, as well as the important role of national parliaments, are indispensable for the good functioning of the rule of law. The Committee agrees that the judiciary in each of the countries of the region has the challenge to fully and in a timely manner fulfill its function of guaranteeing its citizens' rights. Personal freedom of conscience and expression, amongst other rights, must be fully guaranteed by the legal system as this is a prerequisite for the very existence of democracy. At the same time, faced with eventual weaknesses in domestic jurisdictions as regards the protection of human rights, the Committee reiterates its commitment to the Inter-American system for the protection of human rights.

The current reality shows that national states, their systems of representation and the global markets are in frequent contradiction, which results in unrest and disagreement amongst wide sectors of the population. Therefore, the political parties present in the Committee consider it is essential to strengthen the quality indicators of democracy. The full validity of the rule of law and constitutional order is the only environment conducive to achieving the goals of the disadvantaged social sectors, which are at the heart of the concerns and efforts of the Socialist International.

Within this framework, the Committee urges its members to cooperate to promote in the countries of the region policies which are active in the struggle against corruption, for transparency and for access to public information on the work of the state.

The Committee stresses the need for its member parties to strengthen an open and participatory government administration to bring the citizens closer to public issues and to ensure that the policies to be implemented are nurtured with citizens' participation, including them in a democratic decision-making system.

The Committees agrees:

To ratify its commitment to improving the quality of democracy, in the forms and contents of social organisation;

To promote decisive action within the region, to legislate and undertake initiatives in matters of open governance, transparency, the struggle against corruption and better citizens' participation in the work of the government;

To demonstrate the commitment of the SI political parties in the region as efficient tools for social and political change, overcoming individualistic perspectives and providential leaderships;

To reaffirm its commitment to sustainable environmental policies and practices, because the calamities, the epidemics and the pollution do not stop at the Customs checks of any country. On the contrary, they rapidly expand and will only be contained with coordinated responses implemented at a global level.

To highlight that the scope of action of its parties is global, it rests upon the representation of each one of its nations and is empowered by the regions and by the whole world. The markets, the finances and the availability of science, transcend national borders, but also politics must respond at that level in order to ensure the aspirations of the progressive political forces for a society that is more open, more fair and more equal.

IV.- The Committee supports the demands of the Haitian opposition to find mechanisms that will allow a real dialogue between the Haitian government and the opposition political parties for a global agreement that will make possible the holding of free and democratic elections as soon as possible.

V.- The Committee resolves to support the process of emancipation demanded by its member party,

MAN, in Curaçao , so that the people of that nation are able to consolidate its autonomy and to continue advancing towards their full independence. Within this context, the Committee denounces the undue and unjust intervention of the Dutch government to hinder this process by means of the administrative instructions of its Governor in Aruba, Curaçao and St Maarten.

VI.- The Committee congratulated the election of Tabaré Vázquez in Uruguay on the eve of the opening of this meeting, representing a democratic validation of the political programme of the Frente Amplio, which incorporates two member parties of the political family of the Socialist International.

VII.- Finally, the Committee calls for substantial progress in the negotiations which opened on 1 December in Lima on the occasion of the holding in that city of COP 20 on Climate Change, and reaffirms the Socialist International's commitment to this new impetus to achieve an agreement at the Conference in Paris in 2015. This new treaty, which must be binding for all states, is crucial to put a stop to environmental degradation and to open the perspective of real “climate justice” and the recovery of the planet for all the species that inhabit it.

Council

Meeting of the SI Council at the United Nations in Geneva

12-13 December 2014



The Socialist International held its second Council meeting of the year on 12-13 December at the United Nations, Geneva (UNOG). The main theme on the Council agenda was ‘International peace and security: the resolution of conflicts and countering terrorism’. Discussions were also held on our work to gain new democracies and strengthen democratic governance and on the human dimension of migration and the plight of refugees.

The SI Secretary General Luis Ayala, in opening the meeting, expressed that the UN was a particularly fitting venue for these discussions, as it shared many of the values and principles of the Socialist International. He reflected that the agenda of the meeting would touch themes that were at the centre of the global agenda, with particular focus to be paid to the resolution of conflicts. It was therefore important that many directly affected by these conflicts were taking part in the discussions to give their first-hand insights – among them representatives of SI member parties and guests from Iraq and Syria, Israel and Palestine and others from other regions facing conflicts in the world.

Michael Møller, Director-General of the United Nations in Geneva, warmly welcomed all participants and

underlined his wish to see a closer relationship between the UN and policy makers, parties and parliaments. He reflected on an era of greater global insecurity, with a growth in inequality and a corresponding lack of participation and increase in discontent. He therefore spoke of the need for shared values and principles, to get beyond the paradigm of ‘might equals right’. In the fight for solidarity, equality and justice, he argued, the UN could be counted on.



António Guterres, High Commissioner for Refugees and former President of the Socialist International

The Council was next addressed by António Guterres, UN High Commissioner for Refugees and former President of the Socialist International. He reported on the scale of the crisis facing the world, due to the rapidly increasing flows of people newly displaced. The largest mandate of the UNHCR was the Syrian ‘mega crisis’, but crises such as those in Central African Republic, South Sudan and Nigeria continued to cause great suffering to those affected, wreaking great destruction upon the people of those countries. He warned that the humanitarian system was reaching breaking point, with a shortage of resources for food support to refugees, the great losers in a conflict without winners. He stressed the need to tackle the root causes that create humanitarian problems, which urgently needed to be addressed from a political perspective.

SI President George Papandreou referred to the strength of the ongoing partnership between the SI and the UN as he addressed the opening of the Council. He highlighted the importance of social justice and equality to the global social democratic movement, characterised by the fight for freedom, democracy and human rights around the world. This was increasingly important in an era of challenges – violence and sectarianism, the politics of fear and anger, the global refugee crisis, the scourge of Ebola and the persecution of those fighting for democracy. The SI President underlined that the politics of the organisation represented both the need and the possibility to cooperate to deal with these global challenges in an equitable and global way, guided by the principle of solidarity.

On the main theme of ‘International peace and security: the resolution of conflicts and countering terrorism’, the Council heard from a number of actors from the front line of the rapidly developing conflict in Syria and Iraq. Hadi al Bahra, President of the National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces addressed the meeting and called on the international community to play an important part in bringing a solution to the Syrian crisis, though long-term peace would need a national political solution. He stressed that the majority of the Syrian people wanted a free, democratic and inclusive society and he presented a vision of a government for all Syrians of all ethnicities and religions.

With regard to the fight against ISIS and its terrorist insurgency in northern Iraq and Syria, representatives from the Kurdistan Regional Government in northern Iraq, and political parties representing the Kurdish population in northern Iraq and Syria addressed the Council, giving details of their recent efforts to face the terrorist forces and prevent their advance, calling for assistance from the international community in bringing an end to the conflict. A declaration on terror in Iraq and Syria was adopted at the close of the meeting, reflecting the exchanges on this deeply violent and troubling conflict.

Discussions were also held on another unresolved conflict in the Middle East, the question of Israel and Palestine. Representatives of Meretz (Israel) and Fatah and the PNI (Palestine) took part in the discussions, and were able to reach an agreement during the course of the Council on a declaration on peace in the Middle East, reflecting the commitment of the SI and its Israeli and Palestinian members to a two-state solution and the recognition of a Palestinian state.

The rich contributions on the main theme were encapsulated in a declaration of the Council on conflict resolution, which emphasises the role of social democracy as a movement for peace and the fundamental importance of global governance in the quest to eliminate war and violence.

Many illuminating interventions were heard on the theme of our work to gain new democracies and strengthen democratic governance, including the presentation of a report by the SI Special Envoy to

Caracas, Venezuela, José Antonio Viera-Gallo. Unfortunately, there remains far too high a number of committed democrats around the world who are made to suffer for their beliefs. This message was candidly conveyed to the Council, through special addresses from Lilian Tintori, the wife of Leopoldo López, leader of Voluntad Popular and imprisoned in Venezuela since February, and Marina Adamovich, wife of Mikalai Statkevich, the leader of the SI member opposition party BSDP in Belarus, who has been incarcerated since 2010. The Council adopted declarations on democracy in Venezuela and Belarus, which call for the release of Lopez, Statkevich and all the other political prisoners in those countries. It equally endorsed a petition to the government of Bahrain calling for the release of Ebrahim Sharif, an opposition leader currently serving a five-year sentence.

The Council equally adopted a declaration on democracy reflecting the deep and fundamental commitment of the Socialist International to the establishment, development, strengthening and protection of democracy, having heard contributions and perspectives on the theme from all regions of the world.

On the theme of the human dimension of migration and the plight of refugees, the Council heard a report on the recent activity of the SI Committee on migrations, presented by Marco Di Lello (PSI, Italy), vice-chair of the committee, which last met in Catania to continue its work on elaborating a Migrants' Charter. This charter will provide a common platform on migration for socialists from both the north and south of the world, putting emphasis on the dignity, rights and freedoms of migrants.



A number of interventions over the course of the meeting referred to the continuing health emergency in countries affected by the Ebola epidemic. One strongly shared sentiment was the need to isolate the virus and not those countries affected by it. The Council adopted a resolution on Ebola to reflect the position of the SI on this crisis of public health.

The report of the Ethics Committee was presented by its chair, Gilles Mahieu. The committee has continued its work, undertaken since the last

Congress, of assessing the many new applications for membership received by the organisation. The chair reported that the committee proposed to admit the Indian National Congress (INC, India) and Voluntad Popular (VP, Venezuela) as new full members, the All Progressives Congress (APC, Nigeria) as a consultative member (awaiting rapporteur's report), the Unified Lumumbist Party (PALU, DR Congo), Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan (KPIK, Iran), and Komala Party of Kurdistan (KPK, Iran) as observers, and the Euro-Latin American Forum of Progressive and Socialist Parliamentarians, as an associated organisation. The recommendations of the committee were agreed by the Council.

The co-chair of the SI Finance and Administration Committee, Maurice Poler, presented the report of the committee and the budget for 2015, which was adopted. Following the decision of the previous Council to enforce the statutes in regard to non-payment of membership fees, he presented the list of parties and organisations that would cease to be members of the SI with immediate effect, having not paid their fees for three or more years. The decisions were adopted unanimously.

Miguel Vargas (PRD, Dominican Republic), chair of the Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean gave a report on the work of the committee, with particular reference to the last meeting held in Washington at the headquarters of the Organisation of American States.

Elections were held to fill two vacant positions on the SI Presidium. Following a vote in the Council, Pedro Sánchez (secretary-general of PSOE, Spain) and Umut Oran (CHP, Turkey) were unanimously elected. The Council also endorsed the nomination of Carme Chacón (PSOE, Spain) to become the new chair of the SI Mediterranean Committee. It was further announced that the Mediterranean committee would undertake a mission to Western Sahara and presents its findings in a report to the Council.

The Council also adopted a declaration on Uruguay and a statement of solidarity with the relatives of the Mexican students who disappeared in September. The Council recognised that a large number of parliaments around the world have voted on declarations recognizing the Armenian genocide and decided to put this issue on the agenda of the first Council in 2015, one hundred years after this tragedy.

Pakistan

SI condemns Peshawar massacre

17 December 2014

The Socialist International (SI) is deeply shocked and saddened by the abhorrent massacre carried out yesterday by the Pakistani Taliban (TTP) against a military school in Peshawar. We vigorously condemn this despicable act of terror which deliberately targeted hundreds of innocent children, killing at least 132 as well as 9 adults, leaving more than a hundred others injured.

The TTP have claimed that this attack is in retaliation for army-led operations against them in the Khyber and North Waziristan areas. There is no justification for such inhuman acts and the Socialist International further speaks out with a strong and united voice against the misuse of Islam to inflict terror and suffering on the population and in particular the heinous targeting of children.

The international community must stand together against terror and the Socialist International is fully committed in this endeavour. This was also the message that emanated from the SI Council meeting held at the United Nations in Geneva last week.

The Socialist International extends its heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims and expresses its firm solidarity with the Pakistani people and with its member party in Pakistan, the Pakistan People's Party, as they come to terms with this tragedy.

France

SI condemns terrorist attack against Charlie Hebdo magazine in Paris

7 January 2015

The Socialist International deplores and strongly condemns the abhorrent act of terror carried out today in Paris against the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo which has left 12 people dead, including two police officers. We express our deepest condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of those who so tragically lost their lives. Our movement worldwide is with the entire French nation at this sad time, firm in our stand against terror and intimidation, in our defence of life and freedom of expression, and resolute in our commitment to protect and strengthen rights and freedoms wherever they are under threat.

West and Central Africa

Socialist International supports regional efforts to combat Boko Haram in West and Central Africa

20 January 2015

As renewed meetings of the Lake Chad Basin Commission member states plus Benin get underway today in Niamey, Niger, the Socialist International expresses its full support for such regional efforts to collectively combat terrorism in West and Central Africa, in particular the expanding threat posed by Boko Haram.

The recent fall of Malam Fatori, Damasak and Baga in Nigeria as well as last weekend's cross-border raids into Cameroon and the seizing of scores more hostages, are further cause for alarm, both on a humanitarian level and in terms of maintaining peace and stability in the region. Since April 2014 when 276 schoolgirls were abducted by Boko Haram, the world has continued to bear witness to brazen atrocities by this terrorist group including, according to United Nations reports, violence against civilians, abductions, killings, rape, sexual slavery and the recruitment of children as soldiers, amongst other gross human rights violations. The large-scale displacement of people continues to grow, both within Nigeria and into neighbouring countries, adding to the ever increasing humanitarian crisis.

As the SI has previously stated, multilateral solutions are required to counteract terrorism and the international community must stand together in this endeavour. The Socialist International congratulates the government of President Mahamadou Issoufou in Niger for hosting this initiative and reaffirms its solidarity with all those who are engaged in these efforts.

Moldova

Socialist International welcomes agreement for a new coalition government in Moldova

27 January 2015

The Socialist International welcomes the agreement reached by the Democratic Party of Moldova (DPM) and the Liberal Democratic Party of Moldova (LDPM) to form a coalition government.

Following arduous negotiations between the parties in the Moldovan parliament, both the DPM and the LDPM had demonstrated their will and the determination necessary to move forward to secure a minority coalition which will allow Moldova to address pressing domestic issues, the deepening of the process of integration with Europe, and to deal with foreign policy challenges and security concerns relating to current developments in the region.

It is regrettable that not all the parties sharing a common view on the role of Moldova in Europe were part of this agreement which is centered on a sensible response to the urgent political agenda and contributes to the political stability of the country.

The Socialist International expresses its fraternal support for its member party, the Democratic Party of Moldova, and for the new coalition government. Our International now looks forward to the formation of the new government and to its success in responding to the aspirations and hopes of the people of Moldova.

Turkey

Protecting freedom of expression

2 February 2015

The Socialist International once again expresses its deep concern over actions taken by the Turkish authorities which violate the basic freedoms and rights of its people and have no place in a genuine democracy.

The trial and sentencing to six years imprisonment of the President of the Tunceli Bar Association, Ugur Yesiltepe, along with six others, for exercising their democratic rights, among them freedom of expression, is completely unacceptable. This is the first time since the military coup of 1980 that a chair of a Turkish Bar Association is sentenced to prison. Prosecutors alleged that through his work, his writings and his participation in rallies in the province of Tunceli, Yesiltepe was engaged in terrorist acts. The Union of Turkish Bar Associations and all other Provincial Bar Associations have issued statements condemning the verdict and pledging their support for Ugur Yesiltepe.

The Socialist International also protests against the motion that has been drawn up against Veli Agbaba, Deputy Chair of the opposition SI member party, the Republican People's Party, CHP, on grounds of "reasonable suspicion", following corruption allegations made by Agbaba about the ruling party. A recent change in the law in Turkey enables the detention of people and seizure of their property on the basis of a mere "suspicion" as opposed to "strong suspicion based on concrete evidence". The prosecutor in this case has requested a range of prison sentences for Agbaba, ranging from one year and nine months to a maximum of eight years and four months.

Freedom of expression is a fundamental right in any democratic society, guaranteed by constitution in all states where there is true democracy, and it is enshrined in and protected by the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR). These actions are clear violations of freedom of expression by a government which is evidently repressing its judiciary and rendering inoperable the principle of judicial review of government practice and policy.

Mediterranean

Meeting of the SI Mediterranean Committee

Valencia, Spain

13-14 February 2015

On 13-14 February the SI Mediterranean Committee convened in Valencia, Spain, hosted by the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party, PSOE. The discussions focused on two main themes: "The essential new impetus for peace and security in the Mediterranean" and "Making cooperation a policy of cohesion for the Mediterranean". The meeting was opened with speeches by Ximo Puig, Secretary General of the Socialist Party in Valencia, the PSPV, by Luis Ayala, Secretary General of the SI, and Carme Chacón, Chair of the Committee and Secretary for International Relations of the PSOE.

Miguel Ángel Moratinos, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Spain introduced the first main theme and Mustapha Ben Jaafar, Secretary General of Ettakatol, Tunisia, and an Honorary President of the SI, was the introductory speaker of the second theme. The meeting also heard reports from participants on the national situation in the countries of the region.



Following substantive debates, the committee members adopted a Declaration titled ‘A new agenda for the Mediterranean’ reflecting the subjects discussed and agreements reached. The document highlights, in the first place, the need to put into practice a shared vision and a common framework for establishing priorities and cooperation. It also underlines the need to set in motion a common policy on migration based on the principle of solidarity and humanitarian concerns; the need for a real political strategy to confront terrorism on both shores of the Mediterranean including the promotion and defence of rights, freedoms and tolerance; to advance in the consolidation of democracy; to promote a massive new investment plan for the Mediterranean to tackle youth unemployment and to present an alternative to migration and radicalisation; to create the conditions to facilitate a just political solution to the division of the island of Cyprus; to promote a just and negotiated solution to the conflict in the Western Sahara, and to encourage recognition of the State of Palestine as a contribution to the peace process in the Middle East, leading to the coexistence of two States, Israel and Palestine.

On the occasion of this meeting in Valencia, the Contact Group on Western Sahara previously established by the SI gathered and agreed on the terms of the fact-finding mission to visit the region in early May, headed by Juan Antonio Yáñez of the PSOE, former Secretary of State for Foreign and Ibero-American Affairs, and a former ambassador of Spain to the United Nations. A report on the mission’s findings will be presented in the first instance to the Mediterranean Committee and subsequently to the SI Council at its next meeting.

In a closing session in the presence of the media, the Committee was addressed by Joan Calabuig, candidate of the PSPV to Mayor of Valencia; Jaume Collboni, candidate of the PSC to Mayor of Barcelona; Luis Ayala, Secretary General of the SI, and Carme Chacón, Chair of the SI Mediterranean Committee.

DECLARATION OF VALENCIA A NEW AGENDA FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN

Original: Spanish

The social democratic parties of the Mediterranean region gathered in Valencia on 13-14 February 2015 for a meeting of the Socialist International Mediterranean Committee, to discuss, on the one hand, the essential new impetus for peace and security and, on the other hand, the initiatives that are needed to increase cooperation and to overcome the inequalities that exist between the two shores of the Mediterranean Sea.

We recognised that the initiatives set up in the 1990s, such as the Process of Barcelona and, subsequently, the Union for the Mediterranean, have achieved limited results, due in part to the fact that the European countries have found themselves immersed in one of the greatest economic crises, lasting now more than seven years, and also, because the Arab countries have experienced profound changes as a result of the so-called Arab Spring. However, the Mediterranean Committee remains fully committed to the aims of these

initiatives, and reaffirmed the need to create a space for cooperation and dialogue between all the countries of the region, to enable us to address together the global challenges we face.

We are living moments of profound geo-strategic changes in the world, where the Mediterranean continues to be a central focus and where all the global challenges we face are present, interacting and feeding on one another, as much in the areas of peace and security, economics, employment, energy and resource management, as in social and cultural areas.

We are aware that many injustices of all types persist, which give rise to great frustration and are the breeding ground for radical movements that encourage hatred for those who are different, and go as far as the barbaric terrorism of the self-proclaimed “Islamic State”, also known as Daesh or ISIS, particularly in Syria and Iraq where they are responsible for the massacre of the civil population. At the same time, the lack of opportunities and hope for the future for many young people who find it difficult to gain employment, forces them to migrate to the countries in the north.

The Mediterranean Committee is of the opinion that the military and security response cannot be the only way to put a stop to the Jihadist terrorism that is a grave threat to all of us, and not only to the lives of human beings, but also to our values and freedoms. It is essential to implement far-reaching political and diplomatic initiatives to accompany the military actions against terrorism, in order to prevent new attacks and to confront the root causes of this phenomenon.

Furthermore, as socialists, we members of the Mediterranean Committee cannot sit idle while the Mediterranean Sea becomes one big cemetery for thousands of people who migrate in search of a better future for themselves and their families, escaping in many instances from wars, and falling prey to networks of traffickers of human beings. We have to find responses and demand actions, putting the people at the centre of strategies that will permit the channelling of migratory flows, and, at the same time, to fight with determination against organised crime, trafficking of human beings and the tax havens where blood-stained money takes refuge.

It should also be said that we continue without finding solutions to old conflicts like that of Israel and Palestine, the division of Cyprus or the situation in Western Sahara, which persist throughout time without signs of progress, in spite of the different peace initiatives of recent years.

It is for all these reasons that the member parties of the Socialist International Mediterranean Committee, highlighting the strategic importance of the Mediterranean and moved by the will to build the future together, have decided that we need to promote a renewed approach, based on the shared responsibility of all and, therefore, to give a new, multilateral, dimension to relations, based on broad cooperation and solidarity, in which both shores participate under equal conditions in order to define a global Mediterranean initiative to regain and revitalise the spirit of the Barcelona Process.

In this regard, we have agreed a new agenda for cooperation in the Mediterranean, which contains the following ten points:

First: to establish a shared vision and a common strategic global framework to allow us the setting up of priorities, objectives and instruments of cooperation.

Second: to set in motion a truly common European policy on migration, based not only on measures of border control, but involving also political and diplomatic action both in the countries of origin and in the countries of transit, and we strongly demand the solidarity of the European Union to re-establish the recently dismantled “Mare Nostrum” operation and, in general, solidarity with the countries of southern Europe which are in the front line of this humanitarian crisis. At the same time, we ask for support to the efforts in Lebanon to deliver aid to the refugees from the Syrian conflict.

Third: to provide ourselves with a real political strategy to confront terrorism, not only from the point of view of security, police and intelligence services cooperation, but also through the promotion and defence of rights and freedoms, respect and tolerance, as well as the initiative of the Alliance of Civilisations.

Fourth: to advance in the consolidation of democratic systems and the respect for fundamental rights and

freedoms, the defence of plural and inclusive societies where minorities and gender equality are respected. In the case of Egypt, we support the decision of the Social Democratic Party (ESDP) to take part in the next parliamentary elections, in spite of the current electoral law and concern over interventions by the State and the President against the opposition, and we call for the elections to be free, allowing the completion of the road map and to fulfil the aspirations of the Egyptian people for freedom, democracy and social justice. In the case of Tunisia, we welcome the success of the process of democratic transition and the contribution of Ettakatol, we extend our solidarity and encourage the efforts to unify the social democratic forces, and we call on them to monitor developments and to preserve the democratic process faced with those who work against it.

Fifth: to promote a massive plan of investment in the Mediterranean to fight against youth unemployment and to present future generations with an alternative to migration and radicalisation.

Sixth: to take decisive steps to consolidate a European foreign policy towards the Mediterranean, which is coherent and has a strong, united voice.

Seventh: Both shores, north and south, to fight together against the terrorism that equally threatens all of us.

Eighth: to create the appropriate conditions to facilitate a just political solution to bring an end to the division of the island of Cyprus, based on a bi-zonal and bi-communal federation, as well as political equality, as recommended in the UN Security Council resolutions, the High-Level Agreements and international law.

Ninth: to make use of the opportunity for dialogue within the framework of the Mediterranean Committee, as well as the generosity and solidarity demonstrated by the parties, to promote a just and negotiated solution to the conflict in Western Sahara, accompanying the work of the United Nations in this respect.

Tenth: to encourage the recognition of the State of Palestine, understanding that it is a contribution to the peace process in the Middle East that must lead to the coexistence of two States, Israel and Palestine, in peace, security and mutual cooperation.

ANNEX

On the occasion of the meeting of the Socialist International Mediterranean Committee in Valencia, the Contact Group on the situation in Western Sahara, previously established by the SI, convened on Friday 13 February 2015.

Taking into account the decision to send a fact-finding mission sur place, that was ratified by the Council meetings in Mexico and Geneva (2014), the Mediterranean Committee agreed the terms of this mission, which will be chaired by Juan Antonio Yáñez (PSOE), together with a delegation whose members will be announced at a later date. This mission will be travelling to the region at the beginning of May 2015, it will have a broad agenda of contacts and meetings with the collaboration of the parties involved, which will allow them to verify the situation in situ with a view to contribute, in line with our socialist and democratic commitment, to the search for shared solutions, accompanying and encouraging the process of negotiation currently taking place under the auspices of the United Nations.

The chair of the delegation to Western Sahara will present the report of the mission, in the first instance to the Mediterranean Committee and, subsequently, to the next Council of the Socialist International.

Venezuela

Venezuela: on the brink of reaching a point of no return?

20 February 2015

Venezuela has begun to live in a climate of arbitrariness, anguish and repression only comparable to the authoritarian regimes of the past.

At moments when the leader of Voluntad Popular, Leopoldo López, completes one year deprived of his freedom as a political prisoner of the government of Nicolás Maduro, and when other citizens and leaders of the opposition remain in jails and in other places of detention due to arbitrary decisions by the Venezuelan government behind a judiciary which is subservient to the Executive, the harassment, persecution and repression of leaders of the different democratic political forces of the opposition continue unabated.

Yesterday, Antonio Ledezma, leader of one of the opposition parties and metropolitan Mayor of Caracas, was violently arrested by a large number of agents of the State's apparatus of repression, who took him to one of the jails of the regime, while the uncertainty and insecurity of his relatives and of other representatives of the political opposition was made evident before a population which today is vulnerable and unprotected, faced with the whims of the increasing and unacceptable authoritarianism of their government.

Venezuela is becoming increasingly unrecognizable in the world as a democracy, as its government loses legitimacy on a daily basis under the weight of its Human Rights violations and the inhuman and degrading treatment it inflicts on the leaders of the democratic forces and on its own citizens.

The Socialist International, representing progressive political forces throughout the world that stand for social justice and for societies with solidarity and inclusion, rejects and condemns these unacceptable and repressive policies of the Venezuelan government, which throw Venezuelan citizens into a state of helplessness and a step backwards in history, at a time when the only practice that is acceptable everywhere is democracy and respect for the freedoms and rights of all.

We make a fervent call for the immediate release of all the political prisoners, for an end to the persecution and repression of the leaders of the Venezuelan democratic forces by the government of Nicolás Maduro, for a halt to the erosion of the institutions and the legal order of the State, and for an urgent and decided response to the wants and needs of the people who today feel increasingly threatened by the violence and the climate of confrontation which emanates from their own government.

Turkey

SI Secretary General in Turkey

14-15 March

The Secretary General of the Socialist International, Luis Ayala, held meetings in Istanbul and Ankara with SI member the Republican People's Party, CHP and MPs in Turkey.



IPU

The Socialist International at the 132nd IPU Assembly in Hanoi

30 March 2015



On the occasion of the 132nd Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) held in Hanoi from 28 March to 1 April 2015, the Socialist International organised a meeting, as it has at previous IPU Assemblies, of parliamentarians from SI member parties. The discussions included an overview of current international developments of common concern, reports from members on issues of interest

to their national delegation and an exchange of views on the main themes of the IPU agenda.

Participants included representatives from Angola, Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Botswana, Chile, Haiti, Hungary, India, Mongolia, Mali, Mexico, Namibia, Niger, Pakistan, Palestine, South Africa, Spain, Tanzania, United Kingdom and Zambia.

The threat of terrorism, which was the emergency item of the 132nd IPU Assembly, was addressed by participants who reported on current developments in their regions and efforts underway to confront it. Particular attention was drawn to the unstable political situation in Libya as a haven for the flow of arms and drug trafficking, constituting a serious security threat to its neighbours. Recent terrorist activity, such as that in Nigeria and Tunisia, were referred to and the resolve to overcome this scourge collectively through increased international cooperation was emphasised. For the Socialist International, it was underlined, this subject has consistently been central to its discussions both at regional and global level, it was addressed most recently at the SI Council meeting held last December, as equally it would continue to be high on the agenda of forthcoming regional meetings of the SI.

The situation in the Middle East was subject of debate, in particular the situation of Palestine following the recent elections in Israel and the negative statements made by B. Netanyahu during the closing days of the campaign, which did not augur well for future negotiations leading to the much hoped for and long awaited two-state solution, in the interest of peace and progress. The Palestinian participants also reported on the situation regarding their application to join the International Criminal Court. The Chair of the IPU's Committee on Middle East Issues, Lord Judd from the United Kingdom, contributed to the discussions, updating participants on his committee's work. The task of peace-building required unlimited patience and determination to persevere, and it was stressed that the importance of democratic socialism was more relevant and crucial than ever to build understanding and commitment among people.

As regards increasing recognition internationally of the state of Palestine, the representatives from Belgium reported on their attempts while in government to this end, efforts which are now stalled due to the change of government in Brussels, but every opportunity was being made to raise this issue. It was recalled that the SI Council at its last meeting had called on all SI member parties to work towards international recognition of the Palestinian state.

The meeting provided participants with an opportunity to share information on their national situations. The gathering heard of latest developments in Mongolia, where the SI-member MPP had joined in a governing coalition. Elections were due in Mongolia next year, and the party would be contesting with a reinforced social democratic agenda.

In Spain the Socialists had recently won an important victory in Andalucia at a time when Europe was facing complex social and economic problems and rising populism from both left and right. The meeting heard of the work and efforts by the Socialist Party and the preparations underway to face the forthcoming local and regional elections due in May.

Regarding Haiti there existed a serious impasse following the end of the last parliament's mandate and no agreement had been reached for moving forward with elections. It was reported that the existing President remained in office despite the absence of a parliament. It was hoped that free and fair parliamentary elections would take place in September, followed by presidential elections in October for which there were numerous registered candidates. The importance of support for the efforts to achieve true democracy in Haiti was underlined, as it was for a fair solution to the situation of vulnerability affecting citizens of Haitian origin living abroad.

The representatives from the SI-member ruling party in Zambia, the Patriotic Front, reported on the recent elections that had taken place in December following the passing away of the late President Sata. These elections had taken place peacefully and democratically. The country now looked forward to hosting the 134th IPU Assembly in Lusaka in 2016, for which preparations were underway.

In his summing up, the SI Secretary General, who chaired the meeting, made reference to recent and forthcoming activities of the organisation, and recalled the decisions of the last SI Council in regard to terrorism. It was imperative to also focus on Democracy, as it was essential to remove sources of conflict including the deficit of rights and freedoms. It was important, he underlined, that in the face of the many challenges ahead for our movement, the values and principles we represent as social democrats should not be compromised, they should be strengthened through the coherence of our policies and the preservation of our identity as a movement of the left.

Nigeria

Socialist International greets successful Presidential elections in Nigeria

1 April 2015

The Socialist International expresses its satisfaction at the successful holding of the Presidential elections in Nigeria this week which will, for the first time in this country, allow a peaceful transfer of power from one civilian to another representing different political forces. The fact that this achievement takes place in the most populous country of Africa is a significant advance for democracy in that continent.

We extend our recognition to all the political actors in these elections, including the victorious candidate and next President, Muhammadu Buhari, the outgoing President, Goodluck Jonathan, the political parties and the people of Nigeria who genuinely and democratically engaged in the electoral process thereby validating its enormous significance for the nation.

The Socialist International particularly and warmly congratulates the All Progressives Congress, APC, the political force presenting the candidature of M. Buhari, a party which at the last Council meeting of our International in December 2014 was accepted as a member of the organisation.

As an international political family, we wish the new President and the All Progressives Congress in Nigeria strength, wisdom and success in the challenging agenda that lies ahead to deepen and consolidate democracy, to achieve credible and transparent government institutions to allow good and effective governance, to defeat and eliminate terror and its devastating consequences, and to bring about a society free of fear and free of poverty for all the Nigerian people. We call on the entire international community to support Nigeria in these endeavours.

Africa

Meeting of the SI Africa Committee, Bamako, Mali

10-11 April 2015



The Africa Committee of the Socialist International met in Bamako, Mali, on 10-11 April, hosted by the two SI member parties in that country, the Assembly for Mali, RPM, and the Alliance for Democracy in Mali - African Party for Solidarity and Justice, ADEMA-PASJ, centering its discussions on the key issues of Security, Democracy

and Development for the peoples of Africa.

At the opening ceremony, which was attended by members of the government and leaders of the two Malian SI member parties, the gathering heard words of welcome from Dr Boulkassou Haidara, Vice-President of the RPM, and from Prof. Tiémoko Sangaré, President of ADEMA, followed by speeches by Emmanuel Golou, Chair of the Committee, and Luis Ayala, Secretary General of the Socialist International.

In the working sessions which followed, the Committee members discussed an agenda which included two main themes: “Our commitment to putting an end to terrorism in the Sahel and beyond” and “Securing freedoms, rights and development through democracy”.

In regard to the first main theme, Hamadoun Konaté, Malian Minister for Solidarity, Humanitarian Affairs and Reconstruction in the North, made a detailed presentation on the Algiers Accord of 1 March 2015 resulting from extensive negotiations between the government of Mali and the northern armed groups. During the committee’s discussions, an analysis was made of the process underway in the country for national reconciliation and peace. An appeal was made for continued international support in order to move forward swiftly with the signing and implementation of this peace agreement in accordance with the commitments made by the parties involved.



Also under this theme, government minister Zeiny Moulaye gave an exposé on the security situation in the Sahel. The problems of transnational crime and the lack of democratic control of the security sector in the region were discussed, as were a series of vulnerabilities and structural deficits, and the fragility of the State and of the ecology. Included among the threats to peace and security in the continent, participants highlighted the significance of extreme poverty, the phenomenon of religious extremism, migration, drug trafficking, the proliferation of light weapons, terrorism, insurgencies, foreign exploits of the region’s

natural resources and the effects of climate change on the agricultural sector. These factors had dramatic consequences on all aspects of political, economic, social and cultural life, and on governance itself in the countries of the Sahel region.

Participants highlighted the need to integrate the question of security in policies for democratic governance, to increase regional cooperation leading to a shared, collective strategy including the development of adequate information networks, programmes of crime prevention based on cooperation between the different security services and a reform of the justice sector to better protect citizens and to ensure the integrity of those responsible for administering justice. The important role of women in the prevention and the resolution of conflicts as well as in the consolidation of peace and reconciliation was equally recognised and which needed to be encouraged.

A Declaration on the peace process and national reconciliation in Mali was agreed, outlining the main issues involved and the views of Committee members.

The second main theme had two introductory speakers: Nancouma Keita from the RPM and Makan Moussa Sissoko from the ADEMA-PASJ. During the discussions, the fragility of democracy in many countries was highlighted and despite the significant advances made, as for example in the case of Mali, there remained many pressing tasks, amongst them the need to reinforce the State and the security forces, to strengthen the role of political parties and civil society, to empower women, men and the youth, to eliminate marginalisation and increase participation, to provide education for all, including women and girls, to ensure adequate training for a professional press, to effectively address the problem of poverty and its consequences, and to enhance regional cooperation. The need for states to fulfil their obligations as regards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and gender equality was also emphasised.

As part of its agenda, the Committee held a discussion on ways to enhance the work of the Africa Committee and to promote democratic socialism in Africa. The Committee recommended the creation of a summer university for the education of political actors and to instil the core values of the Socialist International, particularly at this time of increasing radicalisation and religious extremism. As a way to influence decision-making at regional level, the Committee was also in favour of the SI seeking a status within regional bodies such as the African Union, and to aim to form a socialist group within the African Union's legislative body, the Pan-African Parliament. The Committee was firm in its resolve to deepen cooperation between its members and to strengthen solidarity and the shared goals of our International, opposing attempts to undermine it through alternative alliances which turn their back on the internal democracy and inclusiveness of our movement. The need for parties to fulfil their financial obligations was underlined as an imperative, as the organisation depended upon it. The SI Secretary General was recognised for his efforts towards the good functioning of the International and its Africa Committee. In relation to the next meeting of the Committee, to take place later this year, participants agreed on Mozambique as the venue.

During the third session, participants at the meeting shared information on the national situation in their respective countries. Positive developments were noted in Niger and Senegal, although it was acknowledged that democracy was an evolving process and international vigilance, support and solidarity was important for further progress to be made. The deficit of democracy and lack of respect for basic rights and freedoms in a number of countries was a cause of continued concern and the Committee reiterated its solidarity with the SI member parties in Cameroon, Chad, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gambia, Mauritania and Swaziland. Calls were made for a peaceful end to the transition in Central African Republic, for successful democratic alternance in Benin, for encouragement to the progressive forces in Burkina Faso, and for further dialogue leading to a political, mutually agreed solution to the situation in Western Sahara. Recognition was extended to H.E. President Mahamadou Issoufou for the important advances made in Niger under his leadership and warm congratulations were expressed to the APC of Nigeria and President-



SI Secretary General with President of Mali HE Boubacar Keita

elect Muhammadu Buhari on their recent electoral success, reiterating at the same time full support for all efforts in that country to consolidate democracy, to defeat and eliminate terror, and to bring progress, peace and stability. A Resolution on the key questions discussed by the Committee was subsequently issued.

Participants expressed their gratitude for the warm, fraternal hospitality extended to them by the two host parties, the RPM and ADEMA-PASJ, as well as by the President of the Republic of Mali, H.E. Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, whose unwavering commitment to the Socialist International and to its values and principles was highlighted.

Declaration of the Socialist International Africa Committee on the peace process and national reconciliation in Mali

Original: French

The Socialist International Africa Committee, meeting in Bamako, Mali, on 10 and 11 April 2015

- Given the depth of the political and security crisis and its multidimensional manifestations in Mali;
- Considering the general context of crises in the African region in general and in the Sahel in particular;
- Analysing the different threats to peace and security in the continent, including the phenomenon of religious extremism, migration, trafficking of all kinds, terrorism, rebellion, foreign exploits of the continent's natural resources, but also and especially the effects of climate change on our core farming and agricultural economy;
- Considering the major challenges for global peace and security which are the Alpha and Omega of all activities of the SI, namely in the areas of:
 - Personal security and social peace
 - Strengthening of democracy and respect for human rights
 - Political stability
 - Sustainable development and the management of natural resources
 - The sovereignty of states
 - Their territorial integrity
 - Peace and international security
- Recognising the important role played in the SI by Mali and its president His Excellency Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, in favour of rights, freedoms and solidarity in Africa and the world;
- Recalling the wisdom and political courage with which the Algiers negotiation process between the government of Mali and northern armed movements was conducted and completed;
- Welcoming inclusive nature of the Algiers talks and the initialling of the draft agreement by the parties involved;
- Welcoming and thanking the international community for its exceptional mobilisation alongside Mali to help end the crisis;
- Stressing the need and urgency for the various stakeholders to move towards the early signing of the peace agreement and its implementation in strict compliance with the commitments made by the parties;

The Socialist International Africa Committee

- Congratulates and thanks H.E. Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, President of the Republic of Mali, for the constant and active role he has always played and continues to play on behalf of Mali within the SI, for the achievement of the ideals of peace, justice, freedom and solidarity;

- Thanks the people and government of Mali for the warm African welcome and hospitality shown to the various delegations of the SI;
- Calls on the Coordination of the Armed Movements to join the project of the Algiers Peace Accords of 1 March 2015;
- Welcomes the good progress of the negotiations process and calls on the government and the armed groups to move toward the early signing of the peace agreement and national reconciliation and its implementation in accordance with the commitments made by the parties involved;
- Reaffirms its commitment, support and solidarity to Mali for a quick and definitive end to the crisis;
- Warmly welcomes the mediation and the whole of the international community for their invaluable contribution to the resolution of the crisis in northern Mali and call on them to persist for an effective implementation of the peace agreement.
- Calls on the international community to take appropriate sanctions against any party that opposes the signing and the implementation of the Algiers Accord of 1 March 2015.

RESOLUTION

The Africa Committee of the Socialist International, hosted by its two member parties in Mali, the Assembly for Mali, RPM, and the Alliance for Democracy, ADEMA-PASJ, met in Bamako on 10-11 April 2015, to discuss core issues of our International which are crucial today for the countries of the region, those of Security, Democracy and Development for the peoples of Africa.

With regard to Security on the continent, the Committee agreed to adopt a special declaration on the process for peace and national reconciliation in Mali, outlining the main issues involved and the views of the members of the Committee.

Considering that the region is currently facing a significant challenge and threats to peace and stability originating from among others, trafficking of arms and drugs, religious radicalism, insurgencies and terrorist activity, the Committee welcomes the Algiers Accord relating to Mali and encourages all the parties involved to move forward with its conclusion so as to effectively advance the efforts for peace and security throughout the whole Sahel region.

In particular, the Committee calls on all countries in the region to incorporate the objective of security as an integral part of the policies for good governance and for sustainable development. Equally, it calls for the setting in motion of programmes for transnational crime prevention based on extensive collaboration between the different actors in the security sector; the development of an information network to counteract the different types of threats; and a reform of the justice sector to better protect the citizens, to fight against impunity and to guarantee the integrity of all those responsible for discharging justice.

At regional level, the Committee calls for the elaboration and adoption of a common security strategy through a security convention in Africa; the strengthening of capacity building for the defence and security forces; and the creation of an African Fund for Security.

The Committee reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and the resolution of conflicts as well as in the consolidation of peace and reconciliation as defined in the UN Security Council resolution 1325 of 31 October 2000. It also calls on the SI member parties in Africa to advance with the elaboration and implementation of the National Action Plan contained in the Resolution 1325.

Regarding Democracy, effective guarantees for the rights and freedoms of all citizens can only be achieved through regular, free and fair elections by secret vote, as stated in Article 21(3) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In this sense, the Committee calls for the strengthening of democracy through transparency in the management of public affairs, respect for the principle of the separation of powers of

the state – the executive, legislative and judiciary; ensuring freedom of the press; and broadening decentralisation through regionalisation to achieve a balanced development.

The efforts to empower people through democracy, to defeat terror and resolve conflicts, will permit us to direct our energy and effort towards advancing our struggle against poverty. Education for all, including women and girls, is important for a stable democracy as well as to overcome the scourge of hunger and want. Good governance in Africa means economic growth and jobs to defeat poverty and unemployment. Removing fear and barriers to inclusion in African societies will empower men and women and the youth to gain a better living, open new opportunities, strengthen health systems, education, social protection, and build a society with more solidarity.

Considering the existing deficit of democracy in a number of countries of the region, the Committee underlines the pressing need to ensure free, transparent and fair elections along with total respect for rights and freedoms and expresses its full solidarity with and support for the SI member parties in Cameroon, Chad, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gambia, Mauritania and Swaziland.

Regarding the Central African Republic, the Committee calls for a peaceful end to the transition and expresses its solidarity with the people of that nation, who since 2012 face a chaotic and uncertain situation which threatens to further destabilise the country. The Committee affirms its full support for our comrade Martin Ziguélé in his bid for the presidency.

The Committee supports and encourages the people of Burkina Faso and its transition government, and calls on the international community to closely follow the process and to lend all the support necessary. We extend our encouragement to the progressive forces in that country, including the MPP, taking part in the presidential elections of October 2015.

In Benin we look forward to an alternance of power resulting from free and fair democratic elections and the Committee expresses its best wishes of success to our comrade Emmanuel Golou, in the presidential elections next year.

The SI Africa Committee lends its recognition to H.E. President Mahamadou Issoufou for the advances made in Niger during his first mandate as head of state and expresses its full support and solidarity with him and the PNDS.

The Committee warmly congratulates the APC of Nigeria and President-elect Muhammadu Buhari on their electoral success and expresses its satisfaction at the exemplary opportunity provided for a peaceful transition of power between civilians. We stand ready to support all efforts in Nigeria to consolidate democracy, achieve good and effective governance and to defeat and eliminate terror.

In regard to Western Sahara, the Committee calls for further dialogue leading to the success of a political, peaceful, mutually shared solution by all parties involved, in line with the process underway under the auspices of the United Nations.

With a view to invigorating democratic socialism in Africa, the Committee recommends the creation of a summer university for the education of political actors and to instil the core values of the SI at a time when radicalism, including religious extremism, is on the increase. The Committee agrees to request that the Socialist International seek a status within regional bodies in Africa, such as the African Union, to deepen cooperation which should also be extended to the parliamentary level, aiming to form a socialist group at the Pan African Parliament.

The Committee calls on all its members to adhere to the Socialist International rules and statutes, notably in regard to the payment of their membership fees, which are indispensable for the functioning of the organisation. The Committee expresses its recognition to the SI Secretary General for his efforts towards the good functioning of the Socialist International and its Africa Committee.

The Committee members reaffirm their resolve to deepen their cooperation and to strengthen the shared goals of our International, opposing any attempt to undermine it by alternative alliances which turn their back on the internal democracy and inclusiveness of our movement.

The Africa Committee extends its warm thanks to the RPM and ADEMA-PASJ for their fraternal hospitality in hosting this meeting and its sincere recognition of H.E. President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita for his work to implement in Mali the principles and values we share and for his untiring commitment to our International.

Gambia

Socialist International calls for respect for opposition in Gambia

17 April 2015

The Socialist International expresses its deep concern and vigorously protests at the actions taken by the government of Gambia aimed at restricting the public activity and outreach of opposition leader Ousainou Darboe and members of the United Democratic Party, UDP, the largest opposition party in Gambia.

The UDP has embarked on a countrywide tour, from 16 to 26 April. The SI is informed that the security forces in Gambia have not granted the UDP the required permission to use a public address system and instead have put up roadblocks to restrict their freedom of movement and have been cordoning off meeting venues.

The Socialist International calls on the Gambian authorities to respect the democratic rights of its citizens, including the right to assembly and free speech, and to ensure the physical integrity of all those who are gathering legally and peacefully.

The Socialist International will remain vigilant to developments in Gambia and reaffirms its solidarity with the UDP, a member party of the Socialist International.

Migrations

The unacceptable tragedy in the Mediterranean Sea must be halted

22 April 2015

The massive number of migrants and refugees that continue to lose their lives in the Mediterranean Sea is shocking and highlights the deadly consequences of the lack of appropriate action from those who have the capacity and obligation to respond, not only from the realm of the institutions but from that of humanity.

In the last week alone, over a thousand people, vulnerable men, women and children, fleeing war, terror and poverty, victims of unscrupulous people-traffickers, have fallen, drowned in the Mediterranean, a sea that today, instead of bringing people and cultures together, is becoming a grave and a divide between dreams and indifference.

Europe needs to act, if only to save itself, because no progress, economic wellbeing or a land of plenty can exist alongside want, fear or death.

Our International, built upon values of justice and solidarity, and which has worked consistently for a world where everyone's existence matters and where everyone is at the centre of the priorities for government and politics, calls on all those with responsibility in Europe to act immediately and effectively to stop this bleeding in the Mediterranean. Our movement will do all it can to contribute to this end.

Western Sahara

Socialist International Mission in search of a political solution

30 April 2015

A Socialist International Mission will hold meetings on 4th and 5th of May in Rabat, the 6th and 7th May in Laayoune, and 8th and 9th of May in Tindouf, in order to promote the search for a solution to the situation in Western Sahara.

The Mission, which was agreed by the SI Mediterranean Committee headed by Carme Chacon of the PSOE in Spain, and which was a decision ratified by the world Council of the International, will hold talks with its members, other political actors, authorities and civil society, to learn in situ the current situation, help the parties move forward in the search for mutually acceptable solutions and encourage the negotiation process taking place under the auspices of the United Nations.

The Mission will be composed of Juan Antonio Yanez PSOE, former Secretary of State of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Spain, who heads the delegation; Mustapha Ben Jaafar, Secretary General of Ettakatol-Democratic Labour Forum in Tunisia and Honorary President of the Socialist International; Adelia de Carvalho, Member of Parliament and Member of the Central Committee of the MPLA in Angola; and Claudio Herrera, Professor of the University of Chile and member of the Secretariat of the Socialist International.

Turkey

Second anniversary of the Gezi Park protests

30 May 2015

As we recognised two years ago, the Gezi Park protests marked a turning point in Turkish politics signalling what people and civil society can achieve to change decisions when they run contrary to the will and aspirations of our citizens. Equally, how the mobilisation of people in one city for a just cause connects with the struggle for more democracy and freedoms in an entire society.

On this second anniversary of the Gezi Park demonstrations, we remember all those who became protagonists of a social and political development that left in Turkey, and around the world, a lasting example of how people from all walks of life can come together to change not only the future of a park, but the priorities of a nation. We equally remember those who fell as victims in that struggle to the criminal violence used against the demonstrators.

The voice for more democracy, for the respect of all rights and all freedoms that sounded in Gezi Park, was strong enough to carry a message of encouragement to others in the same struggle not only throughout Turkey but across the globe. We stand together today, on this second anniversary, with all our Turkish friends who continue defending the Park and a democratic future for all people in Turkey.

Migrations

Extraordinary meeting of the SI Committee on Migrations

01 June 2015



An extraordinary meeting of the SI Migrations Committee was held in Rabat on Monday 1st June, to focus on a social democratic response to the migrations crisis unfolding in different parts of the world. The meeting took place at the Moroccan Parliament, hosted by the Socialist Union of Popular Forces, the USFP.

The Committee, chaired by Habib el Malki (USFP), focused on three key themes: a. Asylum seekers and migrants fleeing conflict and violence: the obligation of the international community to save and protect; b. The moral and humanitarian responsibility to address the plight of migrants escaping poverty and hunger; and c. Building a response to the current crisis based on our values and principles.

Driss Lachgar, First Secretary of the USFP, addressed the opening session. He highlighted the need for a roadmap to develop a comprehensive new approach to today's migrations phenomenon which is not only due to economic factors but also a consequence of the ideology inherited from the cold war, fuelling instability and insecurity, and the correlation with arms merchants and those who finance terrorism. He emphasised the diversity of Morocco with its Moorish and Jewish heritage from immigration in the 16th century and regretted the lack of a medium or long term strategy by today's government in Morocco to effectively deal with this problem.

The meeting also heard a contribution from Driss El Yazami, from the National Council of Human Rights in Morocco who outlined the mutations in migrations over recent decades. He emphasised the current diverse nature of migrants, including those with university degrees and today's high number of women and children, and pointed out that today all countries in the world are affected and all are countries of departure. He also highlighted that the use of migration as a tool for political campaigns should be a subject of debate, as well as the key issue of international governance and the rise of xenophobia.

The SI Secretary General, in concluding the opening session, recalled the point that human history has shown that migration is a source of wealth both economically and culturally and in today's crisis too many people are being denied fundamental rights and too many states are not respecting them. The level of injustice today is immense, bearing in mind the millions displaced by wars, conflicts, persecution, famine and economic hardship. He particularly underlined the need, in facing this crisis, to act in accordance with the values that unite our movement and constitute our identity, and to work for political and human solutions rather than to rely on the use of force.

Outlining the tasks ahead, the Committee chair emphasised the urgent need to come up with a plan of action; to agree on a diagnosis of the situation in different parts of the world to identify the true causes of the circumstances in order to deal with the origins rather than the consequences; to treat the migrations phenomenon as a symptom of the chaos and institutional destruction we see in many states; to seek solutions other than military ones which are repressive; and to take a fresh look at the concept of security, placing people at the center.

As a specially invited guest, Tun Khin, a Rohingya activist recognised internationally, made a presentation on the history and plight of the Rohingya people, an ethnic group in Burma who are denied nationality. Of a population of 3.5 million, more than 1.5 million have been forced to flee their homeland in Burma due to persecution and violence against them. Presently, 8,000 Rohingya people are stranded on boats at sea, being turned away from neighbouring countries. He stressed the importance of addressing the root cause of this displacement of his people.

During the discussions, it was recalled that although the focus was currently on the plight of migrants at sea, migration was also a matter of crossing the desert where many people in Africa died. While emphasising the benefits of migration, it was pointed out that migration itself was not the problem, it was illegal migration that needed to be addressed. There was also a perceived need to bridge a link between migration and development and to adopt programmes for the transfer of technology to stimulate development where needed. Globalisation and the IT revolution had been expected to bring progress, but in some cases it had brought terror, wars, tanks and more deaths. Greater political efforts were required by the international community to work towards liberating oppressed peoples. With regard to Europe, the need to share the burden was emphasised as well as the need to urgently act to save lives.

Formulating an approach that is gender based was underlined, bearing in mind the high number of female migrants and their particular vulnerability to abuse.

At the conclusion of its discussions, the Committee adopted a Declaration and agreed to continue advancing with the Charter of the Rights of Migrants, whose elaboration had begun at previous meetings, with a view to presenting it for adoption at the next Council of the Socialist International due to take place at the United Nations headquarters in New York on 6-7 July. The objective of the Charter is to provide a code of conduct for political action by member parties.

DECLARATION

Original: Spanish

1. Migration is a global phenomenon that affects all countries on all continents.
2. Migrants are first and foremost human beings and, as such, they have rights.
3. Crisis situations and acute conflicts in various regions of the world are producing a tragic and irreversible loss of innocent lives among victims of situations that are not of their making. Given the increasing number of tragedies of this kind, the Migration Committee has decided to convene urgently to discuss the situation and call for immediate action.
4. The Socialist International hopes to find comprehensive, lasting and fair solutions that might resolve the root causes of forced migration.
5. However, the Socialist International is aware of the urgent moral imperative to act to stop the human bloodshed that undermines the basic foundations of social order.
6. The Socialist International Migrations Committee urges all its member parties to stand true to their principles and to act decisively in circumstances in which neutrality or indifference are not an option.
7. We must reject solutions to humanitarian crises that are founded on a logic of force or based exclusively on maintaining security. We also reject the criminalisation of migrants. In their precarious situation, they cannot, under any circumstances, be considered guilty of their situation.
8. We socialists must be guided by the principles and values that we share as socialists: respect for the dignity of all people, equal rights and opportunities and the pursuit of justice in all actions: there is no greater or more urgent political aim than that of safeguarding these principles.

9. We urge socialist Governments and Party representatives at all levels immediately to put forward effective initiatives committing themselves to act with all their strength and resources to stem the loss of human lives resulting from illegal migration.
10. Agreement and commitment must be sought between the various States, both in regional institutions and in the context of the United Nations, but the responsibility of individual States cannot wait or be dependent on the existence of these supranational agreements or undertakings.
11. States not only have an obligation to comply with international law, under the treaties and conventions to which they are party, but also the unavoidable moral duty to act without delay to save human lives who depend on actions and decisions that are within their reach.
12. The Socialist International wants to highlight the case of victims of the situations covered by the 1951 Convention and to urge all signatory countries to comply with it scrupulously.
13. The case of the Rohingya people in Burma requires the international community as a whole, and the neighbouring countries in particular, to take responsibility for protecting these people, persecuted as they are in their place of origin, while lacking any international protection to stop the oppression to which they are subjected or even the slightest degree of solidarity that might provide them with a safe haven. The Socialist International urges the Burmese authorities to cease all forms of persecution of the Rohingya people, to recognise their nationality and the human rights to which they are entitled.
14. The people of Sub-Saharan countries are being affected by armed conflicts, as well as social and gender conflicts and extreme poverty. Emigration is the only escape for many of these people. While the media spotlight is focused on Mediterranean crossings, the new geopolitical map of migration flows shows that the majority of these migrants travel to other African countries. The Socialist International urges socialist parties in the region to strengthen their immigrant protection policies to guarantee their safety and respect for their rights.
15. Countries such as Morocco are an example of a transit country which has become a destination country for many, the authorities of which have sought to establish a policy of acceptance and integration.
16. On numerous occasions, immigrants whose final destination is Europe are subject to abuse by people trafficking networks, whose greed and ruthlessness lead them into situations where their lives are put at risk. The Socialist International urgently calls upon all policy makers to fight these criminal organisations, but also to use all means to prevent the loss of any more lives. It is also a priority to address the different causes, prospects and solutions in an honest dialogue involving European and African political leaders, in order to find global, fair and lasting solutions to the crises that are causing forced migration.
17. In addition to the actions taken directly by States, organisations like the UNHCR, which devote their efforts to caring for millions of refugees and victims of conflicts, urgently need more financial resources to meet their growing needs. Therefore, we call upon all States to contribute jointly to meeting these unavoidable costs.
18. At its next meeting, which will take place at the United Nations headquarters in New York on 6th and 7th July, the Socialist International will discuss the adoption of international undertakings of a global nature, which will include the adoption of a Charter of the Rights of Migrants, which will become a mandatory code of conduct for political action by its member parties.

Turkey

SI congratulates its member parties in Turkey

8 June 2015

As the final votes in the general elections in Turkey are counted, the Socialist International warmly congratulates its member parties, the CHP and the HDP, on their performance in what was a challenging election campaign that included attacks against opposition parties, in which two people were killed and over 100 injured on June 5 in the twin blasts before the HDP's rally in Diyarbakir, and a parliamentary candidate from CHP was wounded in an armed attack in the southern province of Adana.

The Socialist International is particularly pleased that the HDP has surpassed the excessively high and undemocratic threshold of 10% for entering parliament, taking more than 12% of the vote, while the CHP held its ground on 25% of the national vote share. We equally note with great satisfaction the record number of women elected to parliament.

The result of this election is a clear endorsement by the people of Turkey of a multi-party parliamentary democracy. As Turkey enters a period of negotiations in search of a viable ruling coalition and the prospect of possible new elections, the Socialist International stands in solidarity with its member parties and all those in Turkey who seek to achieve social democratic solutions, social justice, equality of opportunities, and full respect of freedoms and right for all citizens.

CIS, the Caucasus and the Black Sea

Meeting of the SI Committee for the CIS, the Caucasus and the Black Sea in Yerevan

8-9 June 2015



The SI Committee for the CIS, the Caucasus and the Black Sea met in Yerevan, Armenia on 8-9 June 2015, hosted by the SI member party in that country, the ARF Socialist Party. The meeting, which was opened by SI Secretary General Luis Ayala, was chaired by Armen Rustamyan (Armenia ARF, co-chair of the committee), Alexandra Dobolyi (Hungary MSzP, co-chair of the committee) and Oleg Tulea (Moldova PDM, vice-chair of

the committee). Delegates from countries across the region discussed the three themes on the agenda, namely the regional priorities of strengthening and extending democracy, securing peace and the resolution of conflicts, and advancing the social democratic agenda.

The meeting was marked by the presence of a delegation from the SDPA, the SI member party in Azerbaijan, whose full participation in the meeting and discussions symbolised the spirit of cooperation and dialogue that characterises the global social democratic movement. Regardless of the ongoing tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan, representatives from the ARF and SDPA engaged in fruitful exchanges over the two days. At the conclusion of the meeting, members of the committee adopted a declaration that encompassed the main points of agreement.

At the opening of the meeting, all those present observed a moment's silence in memory of Vahan Hovanessian, former leader of the ARF and co-chair of the committee, who passed away in December 2014.

On the theme of conflict resolution, the committee reiterated the fundamental belief of the international that peace is necessary for development and prosperity. The declaration reflected the established position of the International on the need for dialogue as a means to bring unresolved conflicts to an end. The committee further called for a ceasefire and respect for international law in eastern Ukraine, and adherence to the provisions contained in the Minsk II agreement.

Conflict is also linked to democracy, as the establishment of genuine democracy can help to eliminate the deficit in rights and freedoms that is a cause of conflict. In-depth exchanges took place on strengthening and extending democracy in recognition of the lack of effective democracy in the countries represented at the meeting. Delegates reflected on the need for the free expression of political will and discussed ways in which member parties of the Socialist International in the CIS, Caucasus and Black Sea could better cooperate to advance shared aims.

Democracy is not just about elections, but is also reflected in the opportunities granted to opposition parties in the period between elections. In a functioning democracy the opposition has an important role as a counterweight to the government and able to ensure that it does not rule without scrutiny. The severely diminished and suppressed opposition in many countries of the region is left neither able to hold the government to account nor build for future elections.

Participants also agreed to place strong emphasis on the social democratic agenda as a way to better communicate the message of social democracy. It was agreed that social democracy was greatly needed in the region in order to present a viable alternative to nationalism and neo-liberalism. The social democratic ideology, which focuses on the needs of all rather than a privileged few, should resonate with citizens deprived of their rights under authoritarian and anti-democratic regimes.

One particular area in which members of the SI were taking the lead was in the fight against corruption, which must be eliminated with the help of reinforced institutions, a strong and independent judiciary and a clear and transparent framework for the pursuit and eradication of financial misconduct.

The reports on national situations in the countries represented were given in the context of the themes of the meeting. Delegates heard how new presidential elections in Belarus would take place later in 2015 despite the continued imprisonment of presidential candidate Mikalai Statkevich following the previous elections. A message from Statkevich was read out in which he thanked the SI for its support and reaffirmed his commitment to freedom, justice and solidarity.

Democracy is also absent in Tajikistan, where the ruling elite has vastly superior power and resources and is denying fundamental rights. An increase in ethnic and religious tensions has also contributed to a precarious situation. The opposition had been denied its democratic right in Kazakhstan, where the SI member party the OSDP was preparing for the next parliamentary elections and trying to present an alternative to the dominance of the ruling party. Azerbaijan also reported problems with elections and public administration.

In Armenia, the ARF was making efforts to improve the system of governance, as this would bring about more effective development and strengthen democratic pluralism. This was a great challenge due to the lack of influence wielded by the opposition and a void in between elections. Progress had been made on democracy in Georgia at the 2012 election, but the ruling coalition had not yet been able to overcome the country's economic obstacles, and the task for social democrats was to engage students, trade unions and workers to change the neoliberal consensus. Difficulties of a different nature had been experienced by the SI member party in Moldova, where delays in forming a coalition and a banking scandal had left the situation unstable.

The committee was updated on latest developments in Ukraine, and heard calls from the representative of that country for withdrawal of forces and respect for the integrity of Ukraine's borders. Democracy in Ukraine was also experiencing severe difficulties, with the authorities trying not to allow room for new political parties to operate. The Russian delegation called for a focus on the social democratic agenda in the region, to counteract neoliberal and neo-nationalist powers which were turning the post-Soviet region into a battlefield.

DECLARATION

The Socialist International Committee for the CIS, the Caucasus and the Black Sea, meeting in Yerevan on 8-9 June 2015, discussed the regional priorities of strengthening and extending democracy, securing peace and the resolution of conflicts and advancing the social democratic agenda.

Strengthening democracy

In many countries of the region, the democratic process and its institutions need to be strengthened, and social democratic parties can be at the forefront of these efforts.

The committee condemns the anti-democratic practices prevalent in countries of the region, where a lack of free and fair elections give no prospect of a democratic change in government. Opposition parties are too frequently being denied their voice, with the incumbent ruling elite able to suppress opposition by manipulating their access to power. The free expression of political will and its translation into representation is the foundation of any true democracy and the development of multi-party democracies is crucial.

The committee supports the proposal of its member party for the transition to a fully proportional election system in Armenia, with a corresponding move towards constitutional changes aimed at adopting a parliamentary form of governance. The country also needs legal measures to strengthen the opposition in its role of controlling and counterbalancing the authorities, and full independence of the judiciary.

The committee noted that presidential elections will once again be held in Belarus, despite the many unresolved issues arising from the previous election in 2010. The arbitrary jailing of political opponents is unacceptable and we reiterate the support of the SI for Mikalai Statkevich, who remains imprisoned despite repeated calls from the SI and other international actors for his release.

The committee expresses its solidarity with the SI member party in Kazakhstan, the OSDP, in building a broad coalition of the National Civic Assembly in preparation for upcoming parliamentary elections. It supports all efforts by the party to provide real an alternative to authoritarianism in the form of a democratic and socially responsible state.

The committee welcomes the profound democratic changes in the spheres of freedom of speech, media and political pluralism, which have taken place in Georgia since 2012. We further encourage the ruling coalition to prioritise development-oriented policies, to enable Georgia to achieve a more inclusive and just economy and fight extreme poverty and inequality.

The committee considers that the establishment of genuine democracy can also help advance the cause of conflict resolution, by eliminating the deficit in rights and freedoms that is a cause of conflict.

Conflict resolution

The committee recognises that the region's unresolved conflicts are a matter of urgent concern, and emphasises the need for peace and protection of life as an utmost priority. Peace comes before all else, as without it there can be no prosperity or development. Conflict also brings additional challenges to democracy when it is used as a pretext for restricting opposition and consolidating power.

The work of the committee underlines the fundamental importance of dialogue to the process of conflict resolution, and bringing together delegates from Armenia and Azerbaijan in Yerevan demonstrates the unique character of the Socialist International in this regard. Resolving such a long-standing dispute, with many intersecting claims on the different sides will require great patience and commitment. The SI will continue to prioritise this spirit of dialogue and mutual understanding through the work of its committee and use the opportunity created by this meeting to reach out to the leadership of both countries in the interests of peace.

The committee reiterates its declaration on overcoming conflicts and securing peace in the region issued in Astana in September 2014, and regrets the lack of progress made in securing a genuine ceasefire in

Ukraine. We urge the parties to the conflict to uphold international law and implement the ceasefire as outlined in the Minsk II agreement, along with all the other provisions therein.

The social democratic agenda

The committee considers that social democracy is greatly needed in the region to develop and strengthen as the alternative to nationalism and neo-liberalism. The challenge for social democratic parties in the region is to communicate their vision for the country in a way that resonates with ordinary citizens. In light of the deficiency of democracy in the region, it is important that social democratic parties enhance cooperation with like-minded partners in other countries to build a coherent message.

Social democracy has a vital role to play in the battle against inequality, which is of utmost importance to the long-term development of countries of the region and prosperity of its citizens. The role of social democracy is to constructively oppose policies that focus merely on serving narrow interests, and instead prioritise the promotion of equality, social justice and sustainable development in the interest of all citizens.

Social democratic parties are committed to the fight against corruption, which is a means by which power becomes entrenched and public funds are diverted away from their intended purpose. Corruption is a scourge and must be tackled in all its forms, with the help of reinforced institutions, a strong and independent judiciary and a clear and transparent framework for the pursuit and eradication of financial misconduct.

Yemen

For peace in Yemen

16 June 2015

The Yemen peace talks underway in Geneva are crucial to establish a framework for a meaningful dialogue between all Yemeni parties and actors in the current crisis.

At stake first and foremost is the fate of the Yemeni people, their country and their future, and the possibility to continue advancing in their search for an inclusive society and a working democracy. Despite the many obstacles encountered, Yemen had been until recently one of the countries where people and their movements had managed to produce positive change.

It is essential that all members of the international community and of the UN Security Council lend their support and give a chance of success to these talks and this process.

The legitimate government of Yemen should be enabled to resume its functions in Sana'a. All irregular forces and armed groups should abide by a ceasefire and withdraw from the cities they currently occupy, airstrikes should stop, and normal life should be restored.

Our International calls on all those involved in the conflict, inside and outside of Yemen, to act in favour of peace, and place the interest of the Yemeni people first.

In the quest to achieve the above, we fully support the sponsoring by the United Nations of these talks, mindful that the involvement of the organisation will continue to be essential in the time ahead.

Mali

Peace agreement in Mali – a milestone to regain stability and security in the Sahel

21 June 2015

The Socialist International greets the completion of the signing yesterday of the highly significant peace and reconciliation agreement between the government of Mali and the coordination coalition of armed groups representing the Tuareg-led rebels, bringing to a conclusion months of arduous negotiations under an Algerian led international mediation, following the armed conflict which began in the North of Mali in 2012. Our International has actively supported the search for peace and stability in Mali and the whole Sahel region, a subject that has been at the center of its agenda at successive meetings of its Presidium, with the participation of HE President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita of Mali and other leaders from that region, at its Council meetings and most recently, at the last meeting of the SI Africa Committee held in the capital of Mali, Bamako, in April this year.

In congratulating all the parties involved, and in particular in recognising the courageous commitment and engagement of HE President Keita to bringing peace and reconciliation to his country, we look forward to the successful implementation of these agreements and we reaffirm our support for the people of Mali working now to rebuild the common spirit of the nation and a shared sense of purpose to regain the path to development and social cohesion.

The Sahel must continue to be a focus of cooperation for the international community, as multiple challenges remain for the people of this region, including extreme poverty, transnational crime, trafficking of drugs and of migrants, religious extremism, terrorism, and the proliferation of weapons, among others. The success of these key agreements signed yesterday are vital not only for Mali, but equally for the people of the entire Sahel. The Socialist International will continue to be engaged with its member parties in the region, institutions and civil society in pursuit of the shared objectives of peace and progress.

Council

Meeting of the SI Council at the United Nations, New York

6-7 July 2015



The Council of the Socialist International convened on 6-7 July at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, as delegates from SI member parties and invited guests gathered to discuss key issues to our

movement on the global agenda. During the two-day meeting, participants addressed the themes of security and the fight against terror, our commitment to the sustainable development goals, and climate change and the COP21.

The Secretary General of the Socialist International, Luis Ayala, opened the meeting and welcomed all delegates. He presented the themes on the agenda, noting that they were topics on which a strong social democratic influence was required. On each theme, delegates would have the chance to listen to interventions from those directly affected by the issues at hand and from others responsible for shaping the debate on an international level. One of the strengths of the Socialist International was its ability to contribute to these discussions from many different perspectives and also to engage on an institutional level, today demonstrating its support for the ideals and work of the United Nations, by holding this meeting at the UN's headquarters.

SI President George Papandreou began his opening address by reflecting on the result of the referendum the previous day in Greece and giving his analysis of the situation that had brought about that outcome, referring to new dividing lines in society as a consequence of regressive policies and globally by those who feel they have benefited from globalisation and those who do not. He referred to the statement by the SI Presidium in relation to Greece issued on the eve of this Council meeting, with an appeal to European leaders. He also underlined that the themes of this meeting reflected priorities of the global progressive movement. The world needed coordinated action against terrorism, to place human rights at the centre of development questions and global cooperation on climate change, he added.



On the theme of security and the fight against terror, representatives from countries suffering from terrorism presented the situation as they had experienced it. Reports on the ongoing battle against the terror group known as ISIS or Daesh were heard from Iraq and Syria, calling for enhanced support from the international community on the front line of their struggle. Many speakers underlined the need to uphold and defend the values of our International in the face of terrorism and violence, and not to abandon democracy and freedoms in pursuit of security. A functioning democratic state is a counter-example to

proponents of fear and terror, and must be safeguarded. Another strong message that arose from the contributions was that more effective international cooperation would be needed to address the new threats to security that are emerging in the world. In the Middle East, North Africa, the Sahel and other areas of the world where terrorist groups operate, they do so without regard for national borders, and the response must therefore be international and multilateral. A declaration outlining the position of the International on terrorism and insecurity in the world, with reference to a number of specific situations touched upon during the discussions, was adopted by the Council. Interventions were also heard from representatives of all the SI member parties in Israel and Palestine, and a declaration of the Council on the Palestinian question was adopted.

On the subject of the sustainable development goals (SDGs), a keynote address was given by Helen Clark, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, UNDP, who emphasised that 2015 was a once in a generation opportunity year for development. She expressed her belief in ambitious, global goals which could motivate people to work for a common cause, and that the SDGs would target unfinished business from the period of the Millennium Development Goals, incorporating the economic, social and environmental aspects of development in a three pillar agenda. Diverse interventions from delegates on this theme highlighted the important role sustainable development had to play in peace and prosperity, tackling inequality and women's and minority rights. There was a consensus that the SDGs were extremely

representative of many of the fundamental objectives of social democracy, which was reflected in a declaration on the subject.

The Socialist International continued to place a high priority on the battle to prevent catastrophic climate change, in particular in light of the upcoming COP21 summit where there are high expectations for a long-awaited comprehensive agreement on tackling climate change. In an introductory speech on the theme, SI Vice-President Elio Di Rupo (Belgium, PS), called for a different economic model on climate change to promote global climate justice. He added that a different way to share the planet was needed, one which combines the environmental struggle with greater social justice and a more effective fight against poverty. The former president of the Maldives, Mohamed Waheed, also gave an introductory speech, in which he outlined the particular challenges faced by small island states confronted with climate change. These countries are often low-lying, remote and underdeveloped, and in need of a progressive agreement in Paris that goes beyond mitigation to help the process of adaptation. The Council adopted a declaration on climate and the COP21 outlining the views of the SI as we approach this moment of great significance for the future of the planet.



Jan Eliasson, UN Deputy Secretary-General

Jan Eliasson, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, was invited to make a special intervention in which he highlighted the tasks of the UN in an ever more complex international situation with greater uncertainty, turmoil and conflict. Ethnic and religious factors in current crises meant that classic diplomatic tools no longer worked as well as in the past, with nations falling apart and posing serious challenges to regional and international security. All international solutions would require a formula based on peace, development and human rights, he underlined.

Following his speech, Eliasson responded to a number of questions from delegates on the mandate of the UN, conflicts in the Sahel and Yemen and the respect for international law, stressing his belief that the UN was a force for good, but there were still occasions where extra efforts were needed from its members for the organisation to live up to its charter and its obligations to all the peoples of the world.

In accordance with a decision by the previous Council meeting, the agenda included a point on the views of the Socialist International on the issue of the Armenian genocide, considering its recognition by a number of national parliaments and supranational institutions. Following an agreement with the SI Vice-Presidents from Armenia and Turkey, it was announced and agreed by the Council that the Socialist International would hold a special hearing or round-table discussion on this issue later in the year under the title “Would Turkish recognition of Armenian genocide allow for genuine reconciliation between Turkey and Armenia?”. This meeting would include the participation of representatives of the SI member parties in Turkey and Armenia as well as other member parties interested in taking part, specially invited intellectuals, leaders of social organisations and others.

Following intensive work by the SI Committee on Migrations, a final draft of an SI Charter on the rights of Migrants was presented to the Council by Habib el-Malki (Morocco, USFP) chair of the committee. This Charter places the migration question at the heart of the agenda of the SI, focusing on the rights of each migrant, which are so often overlooked in the national debates on this issue. The Council unanimously adopted the Charter, underlining the commitment of the International to the fundamental rights of all people on the planet.

The recent SI Mission on Western Sahara was introduced by the chair of the SI Mediterranean Committee, Carme Chacón (PSOE, Spain) as an active contribution of the SI towards peace. In accordance with previous resolutions and decisions of the Socialist International, the mission had held talks in situ with the parties to the conflict and a report had been completed. Juan Antonio Yáñez-Barnuevo (PSOE, Spain), who headed the mission, presented an outline of the report and its recommendations. The Council, in accepting the report by consensus, recorded its appreciation for the work of the committee and its chair, and its recognition to the members of the mission. The Council agreed to continue to be actively engaged on this

matter with a view to contributing to achieve a political solution to this conflict and a fair and lasting peace in that part of the world.

The Council heard a contribution on current developments in Venezuela, ahead of the announced legislative elections in December this year, and adopted a resolution calling for the release of Leopoldo López, Daniel Ceballos, Antonio Ledezma and all other political prisoners, guarantees of respect for fundamental rights and freedoms, and the return of those politically exiled. A further resolution calling for the rights of prisoner Marafa Hamidou Yaya in Cameroon was also adopted.

Reports given by the co-chair of SIFAC and the chair of the Ethics Committee were also approved. The Council took note, in accordance with the statutes, of the ceasing of membership of four parties due to non-payment of membership fees.

The Council meeting elected Driss Lachgar, leader of the USFP, Morocco, as a new SI Vice-President and member of the SI Presidium.

Finally, the Council agreed to hold the second SI Council meeting of 2015 in Luanda, Angola, accepting the fraternal invitation extended by the MPLA, the SI member party in that country.

Turkey

SI condemns terrorist attack in Suruc, Turkey

21 July 2015

The Socialist International vigorously condemns the terrorist attack carried out yesterday in Suruc, Turkey, killing over 30 people and injuring hundreds. We extend our deepest condolences to the family and friends of the victims and our sympathy to the Turkish nation.

The explosion, which was carried out at the Amara Cultural Park in Suruc where hundreds of young people had gathered in support of assistance to rebuild the city of Kobani, is believed to be the work of the terrorist organisation known as ISIS or Daesh.

While recalling the Declaration on Security and the Fight against Terror issued by the Council of the Socialist International at its recent meeting at the United Nations in New York, the Socialist International deplores this contemptible disregard for human life and renews its call for a strengthened coordinated multilateral response to the scourge of terrorism, with greater international cooperation.

Belarus

SI welcomes release of Mikalai Statkevich and other political prisoners in Belarus

24 August 2015

The release from prison of Mikalai Statkevich along with five other political prisoners in Belarus is greeted by the Socialist International, having campaigned consistently for his freedom and rights, as well as for those of all others unjustly detained for political reasons in Belarus.

Statkevich, leader of the SI-member Belarus Social Democratic Party (BSDP-NH), and an opposition presidential candidate in the elections of December 2010, has been held in prison since that time for taking part in peaceful pro-democracy protests against the authoritarian regime of President Lukashenko.

From the moment of his arrest, the Socialist International has been active in demanding his release, including holding meetings in January 2011 with the party, members of the press, legal, civil and human rights organisations in the Belarusian capital of Minsk in which the SI Secretary General, on behalf of the International, denounced the injustices of the regime and highlighted the support and solidarity of the Socialist International and its members worldwide for Statkevich and for all those struggling for democracy and human rights in Belarus. This engagement has continued unabated throughout the four years and eight months of his imprisonment with public statements, declarations of the organisation and by recognising and supporting the courageous campaign of his wife, Marina Adamovich, who has regularly been invited to address the Council and committee meetings of the SI on the situation facing Statkevich and other political prisoners in Belarus.

While welcoming the release of Statkevich and the other five political prisoners, the Socialist International firmly reiterates the need for the holding of free and fair elections and for true democracy in Belarus. Equally, the SI demands the immediate re-instatement of the political rights of Mikalai Statkevich and other opposition figures along with full respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all the citizens, and calls on the international community to remain uncompromising in its demand for true democratic governance in Belarus. The Socialist International will continue actively engaged in support of Mikalai Statkevich and the social democrats in Belarus until this is achieved.

Latin America and the Caribbean

Meeting of the SI Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean in Colombia

28-29 August 2015



On August 28th and 29th, the Socialist International Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean convened in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, hosted by the Partido Liberal Colombiano (Liberal Party of Colombia, PLC). The topics for discussion were

‘Peace in Colombia – a common objective for people throughout the region and a necessity for progress for all’ and ‘The current electoral processes in Latin America and the Caribbean: perspectives and evaluations’. The member parties of the region also presented the Committee with reports on their national situations and their work in their respective countries.

At the opening of the meeting, the Committee had the opportunity to listen to the Colombian national anthem and other choral works performed by an ensemble of children from families which had been displaced from the zones stricken by the armed conflict that has affected Colombia for more than half a

century. With 'Music for Reconciliation' emblazoned on their shirts, the ensemble gave expression to the hopes and desires invested by Colombian society in the peace process currently underway.

Subsequently, a video was shown: this had been made in March, 1990, when the guerrilla group 'April 19 Movement' (M19) and the Colombian government signed the agreement that allowed M19 to be demobilised and reintegrated into the social and political life of the country. This event, some 25 years ago, demonstrates the Socialist International's longstanding commitment to peace in Colombia, creating trust between the parties, furthering political dialogue, and putting together a Commission to supervise the surrender and destruction of the weapons held by M19.

During the opening session of the meeting, there were contributions from the Secretary General of the SI, Luis Ayala, from PLC leader Horacio Serpa, and from the chair of the SI Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean, Miguel Vargas Maldonado (PRD, Dominican Republic).

Luis Ayala began by thanking the Liberal Party (PLC) for their hospitality. Referring to the video, he reiterated that the ideals and values that inspired the SI 25 years ago were the same as those that motivate the organisation and its members today. He recalled that peace is a condition for those values to be embodied and realised, laying down weapons through political action. Likewise, he maintained, this meeting of the Committee in Cartagena de Indias has a special significance, being held at the same time as the peace process between the Colombian government and the FARC was making progress in Havana, and reaffirms the commitment of the SI to peace in Colombia. The SI is there with the same message about constructing peace in other parts of the world where there are ongoing or unresolved conflicts, including the fight against terrorism, such as Syria, Northern Iraq and other regions. Or in its work to ensure the peaceful resolution of the conflicts in the Middle East; between Russia and Ukraine; in Western Sahara; between Turkey and Armenia. In all these cases, the SI and its member parties are working towards action and political dialogue, inspired by our ideals and values, he added. He also mentioned the crisis on the Colombian-Venezuelan border, at its height during the Committee's meeting, expressing the SI's dismay about the situation and the solidarity of the organisation with the Colombian families on the border between the two nations whose dignity and rights have been affected.



Luis Ayala considered the economic situation affecting the countries of the region to be a challenge for the member parties from Latin America and the Caribbean, and he urged them to face forthcoming electoral commitments, in a current atmosphere of diminishing popularity of governments and politics, maintaining ambitious objectives for the people and holding fast to the ideals and principles of the social democratic movement. At the same time, he emphasised the current importance of transparency and closeness to the people and called for a continuing clear position on the fight against corruption and the rejection of improper

relations that can arise between money and politics. Lastly, he expressed his belief that the SI has been, and continues to be, a presence in the great challenges facing the world today, that are also challenges for the region. Amongst others, he recalled the work of the SI on climate change, that will continue with the SI presence at the COP21 Conference in Paris. Luis Ayala concluded by noting that a central issue for Latin America and the Caribbean was to make progress in the overcoming of inequality, and to this end the SI will, in the second semester of this year, begin the work of the SI's Commission on this issue with people from this and every region.

Horacio Serpa welcomed the Committee on behalf of the PLC and expressed thanks for the SI's presence in Colombia at a moment that was especially important for the advance of the peace process. He explained that currently the PLC is the second most important Colombian political party, with 17 senators and 42 deputies, and holds such important political positions as the presidency of the Senate, the Ministry of the

Interior and the mayoralty of the city of Cartagena itself. In the elections this coming October, he continued, the PLC hopes to position itself as the leading political force in Colombia, looking to have a member of the party elected as president of the Republic in 2018. In addition, he indicated to those present that given the present situation on the border with Venezuela, the country was united in its indignant rejection of the decisions that Nicolás Maduro has made.

Referring to the peace process, Horacio Serpa recalled that after independence from Spain, Colombia experienced two hundred years of conflict. He described the various confrontations of the 20th century as a real humanitarian tragedy. Since 1954 the country has witnessed the rise of various subversive groups. After the signing of the peace accord with M19, four out of seven presidential candidates were assassinated during 1990, among them Carlos Pizarro León-Gómez and the Liberal candidate Luis Carlos Galán, a situation of violence that generated a powerful social movement and set in motion the constituent process, with the creation of a National Constituent Assembly, and, in the end, the adoption of a new Constitution in 1991. Referring to the peace process currently taking place between the FARC and the Colombian government, Horacio Serpa expressed his hope that this might come to a satisfactory end in the near future, in a further four to six months, and expressed his desire that the SI would continue to support Colombia in the construction of peace after the signing of the accords.

The chair of the Committee, Miguel Vargas Maldonado, also thanked the PLC for their fraternal welcome. He recalled that during the Committee's last meeting at the headquarters of the Organisation of American States in Washington on December 1st and 2nd, 2014, one of the challenges for the region that had already been sketched out was how to enact public policies to confront economic slowdown to make what he called 'better growth' possible: to reduce inequality and poverty in our countries. At the same time, he maintained, governments and parties faced the challenge of becoming more transparent, moving closer to people, and involving citizens in political participation. The democracies of the region must be preserved and freedoms strengthened, he noted. In this regard, he mentioned the SI's commitment to democracy in Venezuela, recalling the work of the SI Special Envoy to Caracas last November and the report that he presented to the SI Council in Geneva at the end of 2014. Again today, he indicated, the crisis on the border between Colombia and Venezuela and the state of emergency promulgated in the zone by the government of President Maduro, can be seen as a threat to democracy in that country. Lastly, the chair reminded those present of the issues for discussion and opened the meeting.

In relation to the first item on the agenda 'Peace in Colombia – a common objective for people throughout the region and a necessity for everyone's progress', the members of the Committee heard contributions from leaders of the PLC Eduardo Verano de la Rosa, Fabio Raúl Amin, and Héctor Olimpo Espinosa. Delegates from other countries of the region Francisco Rosales (FSLN, Nicaragua), Marcelo Stubrin (UCR, Argentina), Rafael Michelini (NE, Uruguay, Vice-President of the SI), Rafael Tejada (PRD, Dominican Republic), Henry Ramos (AD, Venezuela, Vice-President of the SI), Elsa Espinosa (PRI, Mexico, Vice-Chair of the Committee), Ricardo Navarrete (PRSD, Chile) and Margarita Zapata (FSLN, Nicaragua), also made contributions to the debate, offering reflections on the basis of the peace processes in their own nations, as in the case of the contributions of the Nicaraguan delegates, and formulating analyses and commentaries on the opportunities, challenges and threats that they observe in the experience underway in Colombia.

The Colombian Minister of the Interior, Juan Fernando Cristo Bustos, in a contribution on the background of the issue, gave the Committee an account of the origin and progress of the negotiations underway in Havana. In his judgment, Colombia today has the chance to put an end to a conflict that has already lasted for more than half a century, something that is key to the development of the country. Peace is a long-standing desire and now seems to be a real possibility in the near future. He recognised the progress seen in the recent period has been made possible thanks to the government's commitment to the peace process. At present, he recalled, concrete negotiations are going forward in Havana, whilst in Colombia discussion has already begun about the way in which the citizenry will have a chance to endorse what has been agreed and about the instruments that could guarantee the FARC giving up the armed struggle and re-integrating itself into the society and politics of the country. He held that the progress made in the negotiations can be explained by a number of factors: the decision of President Santos to create an international framework conducive to peace in relations with Ecuador, Venezuela and other countries of the area; the passing of laws that recognise the victims of the conflict and grant them reparation and the restitution of their lands,

not leaving the discussion and implementation of these matters until after the conflict; and the military-strategic superiority of the State vis à vis the subversive groups. To these should be added: the fact that the peace process has victims at the centre of its concerns; there is a commitment to seek endorsement by the citizens of the country; and there are public opponents, among others a sector of the opposition to the government. All of these aspects represent something new when compared with previous frustrating experiences. Between January 1st 2012 and now, the Minister of the Interior informed, more than half a million victims of agents of the State, the FARC and the ELN and paramilitary groups have received compensation. It is this backdrop that allows the rights of the victims to be at the centre of the discussions between the government and the FARC. In his opinion, this novel focus is what explains the progress in the peace process. What is currently under discussion in Havana is the fourth of five points on the agenda, and has to do with the rights of victims: for many it is certainly the most complex of all the issues being addressed, and will require Truth Commissions to be set up and questions of transitional justice to be confronted. On the question of economic compensation and land restitution: during the long period of confrontation, around two million hectares were taken and another four million were abandoned. At present it has already been possible to hand back one hundred thousand hectares and this is expected to rise to a million in 2016.

Minister Cristo ended his contribution by emphasising that today Colombia is breathing the air of democracy and its society is increasingly more civilised and respectful of human rights, which allows the future after the conclusion of the agreements with the FARC to be faced with confidence. However, he reminded the Committee that these agreements represent a beginning to the construction of peace in the country, not an end. Meetings like this one and the repeated commitment of the SI to Colombia after the conflict are important for all Colombians and particularly for the seven million victims of the fifty years of conflict and their relatives, he said.

For the second item on the agenda, concerning the forthcoming electoral processes in the countries of the region, the Committee received a report sent by the Assistant National Secretary of its member party in Guatemala, Unidad Nacional de la Esperanza (National Unity of Hope, UNE), Haroldo Rodas. The document gave an analysis of the current crisis in the country, its possible effects on the next general elections fixed for September 6th, and the chances of their candidate Sandra Torres, a Vice-President of the SI, going through to the second round. The representatives of the member parties from Argentina Gabriela Troiano (PS) and Jesús Rodríguez (UCR) gave a report to the Committee on the results of the primary elections (or *paso* the Spanish acronym derived from ‘open, simultaneous and compulsory primaries’) that took place in the country on August 9th 2015, and gave their predictions as to what might lie in store in the elections in October for candidates for the presidential and parliamentary elections and the other posts allocated by popular vote. Jorge del Castillo, the delegate from the Peruvian party APRA, reminded the Committee that although the general elections in Peru will take place next year on April 10th and therefore seem some way off, the campaigns are already underway, with the polls indicating that the candidates for the Fuerza Popular (Popular Power) party, Keiko Fujimori, and the movement Peruanos por el Cambio (Peruvians for Change, PPK) Pedro Pablo Kuczynski are currently frontrunners. However the electoral scene eight months from the elections is completely open and APRA is in a process of refining its participation in them.

Lastly, delegates from the member parties in Venezuela Henry Ramos (AD), Manuel Rosales (UNT), Carlos Vecchio (VP) and Jorge Mirabal (MAS) informed the Committee that the social, economic and political crisis in Venezuela was rapidly getting worse. In the face of predictably adverse consequences for the governing party in the forthcoming parliamentary elections set for December 6th, the government of President Maduro has intensified the restrictions on freedom of expression and the communication media, disqualified more political candidates on administrative and judicial grounds, and continued to impose restrictions on the human rights of Venezuelans. The Committee was brought up to date on the situation of Leopoldo López the leader of Voluntad Popular by one of his lawyers Roberto Marrero (VP, Venezuela), confirming that López remains under arbitrary arrest, with his human rights violated. In the judgment of the Venezuelan delegates, the crisis on the Colombia-Venezuela border could turn out to be a strategy by the ruling party to obstruct the elections. The Venezuelan delegates insisted on the absolute necessity of fair elections taking place on December 6th and repeated their call for the SI to be present in the country alongside Venezuelan democrats during the process.

In relation to the various national situations, the Committee was also able to hear the reports of the member parties in Argentina (Jesús Rodríguez and Gabriela Troiano, UCR and PS respectively), Brazil (Marcio Bins, PDT, vice-chair of the Committee), Chile (Patricio Tombolini and Pedro Neira, PRSD), Mexico (Elsa Espinosa, vice-chair of the Committee, PRI), Nicaragua (Francisco Rosales, FSLN), Panama (Humberto López Tirone, PRD), Peru (Jorge del Castillo, APRA), Puerto Rico (Rubén Berríos, PIP, Honorary President of the SI), Uruguay (Rafael Michelini, NE, Vice-President of the SI) and Venezuela (Timoteo Zambrano, UNT).

Advancing with the agenda of the meeting, the Committee unanimously adopted a resolution of support for peace in Colombia, by which it was agreed that a Commission of the Socialist International would be set up to help further the peace process in Colombia. Similarly, a resolution was agreed on the situation in Venezuela and the crisis on the border between that country and Colombia.

In closing the meeting, the Secretary General of the International, Luis Ayala, again thanked Horacio Serpa and the PLC for their hospitality and applauded the high level of discussions and the agreements reached at the meeting. He recalled the presence at the Council in Geneva last December of Marina Adamovich, the wife of the Byelorussian leader Mikalai Statkevich, recently freed after four years of unjust political imprisonment; he expressed his hope that Lilian Tintori, who had also spoken at Geneva, might soon be reunited with her husband, Leopoldo López, in freedom. As long as human rights and democracy are not fully respected in Venezuela, Luis Ayala reiterated, the SI will remain committed and will be alongside its member parties in the elections on December 6th.

Lastly, given some of the topics addressed during these debates, and reflecting our commitment to the integrity and to the improvement of the quality of our democracies, he proposed that the agenda of the next meeting could include the issues of public financing of political parties and the transparency of electoral campaigns, along with a discussion and analysis of electoral processes and systems in Latin America and the Caribbean. This was agreed.

Republica Dominicana

Allianza PRD-PLD en Republica Dominicana con apoyo de la IS

7 de septiembre de 2015



SI Secretary General witnesses the Alliance between SI member, Partido Revolucionario Dominicano, PRD, and the Partido de la Liberacion Dominicana, PLD, on 7 September 2015.

Venezuela

Socialist International protests against the sentencing of Leopoldo López

10 September 2015

After a year and a half imprisoned in the Military Jail of Ramo Verde in the suburbs of Caracas, the Judicial Power of Venezuela passed sentence in the process against Leopoldo López, political leader in opposition to the government of Nicolás Maduro and Coordinator of Voluntad Popular (VP), a member party of the Socialist International. Today, the judge, Susana Barreiros, condemned López to a jail sentence of 13 years and nine months to be served in the same prison in which he has been detained since February 2014, under charges of being responsible for public incitement, unlawful association and setting fire to and damaging private property during the violent acts that took place in Caracas on 12 February 2014.

The Socialist International cannot but reject and deplore this arbitrary judicial decision. During the entire process we have kept very close to López, to his family, to his party and to the democratic forces in Venezuela. We have repeatedly condemned the constant violations of his rights throughout his trial, during which the guarantees of due process were permanently denied. From the beginning, we have denounced the political motivation behind the detention of Leopoldo López and his condition as a prisoner of conscience, and this sentence only reinforces our denunciations. Along with our firm voice, other voices have been raised from the United Nations, from governments, from serving and former heads of state or government, from parliaments and from different non-governmental organisations which defend human rights, as well as that of civil society organisations.

In the face of these developments, the Socialist International, along with strongly protesting against this sentence, decisively reaffirms today its commitment to remain mobilised in favour of the liberation of Leopoldo López and all the political prisoners in Venezuela and in favour of democracy in that country.

The election of representatives to the National Assembly that will take place on 6 December 2015 must be just and transparent and with the presence of international observers. Democracy is the only legitimate way to overcome the tensions, polarisation and serious economic and social crisis that today affects Venezuela.

We equally deeply regret the confrontations seen today outside the Palace of Justice in Caracas which left one person dead and numerous others injured, and express our hope for an immediate end to the violence.

We reiterate today our deep solidarity with the people of Venezuela in their efforts to achieve respect for the freedoms and rights of all its citizens and to overcome the difficult moments they are facing.

The Refugee Crisis

SI call for Solidarity and Political Action

14 September 2015

The Socialist International calls on the EU to reach a speedy agreement on a fair and humane plan for accommodating the continuing flow of refugees and asylum seekers fleeing conflict zones. While it is important to recognise that this is an issue of global dimension and requires that countries from all continents assume their fair share of responsibility, it is crucial for Europe today to act in line with the values, the spirit of solidarity and of common progress upon which the EU was founded with the participation of our movement, and in keeping with its moral and legal obligations.

The current global displacement of tens of millions of human beings as a result of conflict, repression or hunger is a shared burden of humanity. However, a large part of this burden is presently borne disproportionately by poorer countries. The mass movement of people, as recent years have shown, is not abating. On the contrary, it has grown and continues to grow on an ever increasing scale. The ongoing

conflicts affecting numerous countries of the Middle East are indications that this phenomenon has no end in sight. And the dire living conditions in the poorest parts of the world or where people are suffering from repression will lead to continued migration on a large scale for the foreseeable future.

At the SI Council meeting held at the UN in Geneva in December 2014 António Guterres, UN High Commissioner for Refugees and former President of the Socialist International, warned that the humanitarian system was reaching breaking point. He also stressed the crucial need to tackle the root causes that create humanitarian problems, which urgently needed to be addressed from a political perspective.

The Socialist International remains committed to promoting political solutions to this crisis, convinced that political action is the only way to achieve the conditions necessary for peace, democracy and equality. This position has been borne out at the numerous meetings of its Migrations Committee, its regional committees and its Councils, the most recent of which, held at the UN headquarters in New York, adopted unanimously a Charter for the Rights of Migrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers to which all its member parties worldwide subscribe.

Today we reiterate our call made in April this year to all those with responsibility in Europe to act immediately and effectively, and as we said then: “Europe needs to act, if only to save itself, because no progress, economic wellbeing or a land of plenty can exist alongside want, fear or death.”

Burkina Faso

Socialist International condemns military coup and the interruption of the process to democracy in Burkina Faso

17 September 2015

The Socialist International vigorously condemns the military coup in Burkina Faso and the capture of interim President Michel Kafando, along with Prime Minister Isaac Zida and other members of the government, by the Presidential Security Regiment (RSP), an elite force set up by the former President Blaise Compaoré.

Our International calls for the immediate release of all those unlawfully detained, the restoration of the legitimate interim government, and the full resumption of the process towards the holding of free and fair elections scheduled for October 11.

Amid reports of heavy shooting overnight in the capital, Ouagadougou, and the presence in the streets of people protesting the military interruption of the transitional process to democracy, we remind the military forces behind this coup that international public opinion and institutions will hold them responsible for resulting casualties.

Burkina Faso must be allowed to join the community of democratic nations and put an end once and for all to the interference by the military in the political affairs of the country. The Socialist International extends its solidarity and full support to all the people of Burkina Faso mobilised for democracy and all the political democratic forces there working to this end.

UN Sustainable Development Summit

SI welcomes the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and Global Goals

27 September 2015

At the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit, which took place this weekend in New York, member states adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and a new set of Global Goals. These Goals have the aim of ending extreme poverty, fighting inequality and injustice, and tackling climate change over the next fifteen years. The Socialist International and its member parties have made a fundamental commitment to the achievement of these objectives.

The SI has expressed its support for the post-2015 agenda, most recently from the United Nations headquarters on the occasion of its last Council meeting in July. The Council recognised the singular importance of 2015 in terms of development, and declared the Global Goals to be in line with the basic values of the global social democratic movement, calling on all countries to adopt the post-2015 agenda.

The Socialist International believes it is truly a time for global action, and the Global Goals are a vital step to ending poverty. This important statement of intent must be matched by actions, in particular in order to ensure access to finance for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Active engagement is needed to ensure that development, sustainability and security go hand in hand, making use of technological advances to deliver sustainable industrialisation that can remove the poverty and underdevelopment that contribute to insecurity and conflict in the world.

Equality is a crucial element of the platform of the SI and we see the urgent need to reduce inequality between and within countries as a core progressive principle. We also welcome all initiatives to achieve gender equality and end gender-based discrimination. Women's empowerment will require an end to violence against women, equal access to education and the elimination of poverty.

The success of the Global Goals also requires a willingness and ambition to tackle climate change, one of the biggest threats to the planet and its people. An ambitious and binding international commitment to address anthropogenic climate change is needed to halt and reverse the dire consequences we have already been witnessing across the globe, and for sustainable development, with preservation of the long-term future of the planet at its core. In this regard, the SI and its member parties will continue to work for a legally binding and universal agreement on climate change at COP21 in Paris.

Ending poverty, promoting equality and taking action on climate change have been central to the identity of the Socialist International, in line with three pillars of our movement's agenda, the economic, the social and the environmental. The adoption of these seventeen Global Goals should give us optimism, but must also be a spur to redouble our efforts and those of our member parties to make this a priority for our generation, in order to secure a brighter future for the generations to come.

Turkey

The SI condemns the massive terrorist attack in Ankara and calls for a thorough investigation

12 October 2015

The Socialist International strongly condemns the massive terrorist attack on a peaceful rally in Ankara that took place on Saturday 10 October, killing over a hundred people and injuring many more.

We extend our deepest sympathy to the families of the victims and our strong solidarity with all the people in Turkey who stand against violence and who remain committed to the democratic path, the defence of their freedoms and the enjoyment of their rights.

We equally stand alongside all those who embrace and defend the values we share with political actors in Turkey and, in particular, we extend our solidarity to the Republican People's Party, CHP, today in the opposition, and to the Peoples' Democratic Party, HDP, whose sympathisers have been targeted in this abhorrent attack.

At this hour of mourning, we wish the Turkish people courage and determination in placing peace at the centre of the nation's future, and keeping it safe from any attempt to destabilise it or derail it from its democratic path as they approach forthcoming elections scheduled for 1 November 2015. We call on the Turkish authorities for an exhaustive and transparent investigation to establish those who are behind this massacre.

Venezuela

Return of Manuel Rosales, leader of the UNT Party, to Venezuela

15 October 2015

The Socialist International is closely following the return today of Manuel Rosales, leader of *Un Nuevo Tiempo* (UNT), to Venezuela. The ex-presidential candidate is flying this afternoon from the Island of Aruba to the city of Maracaibo, capital of the State of Zulia, where Rosales served as its former Governor, thus putting an end to his six years in exile.

The Socialist International expresses solidarity with the decision of the leader of the UNT, one of its member parties in Venezuela. With his return, Manuel Rosales defends the fundamental right of all Venezuelans to live in their own country. He returns to Venezuela fully aware that he is affected by an open judicial process against him. The Socialist International demands once again the Venezuelan judicial authorities to respect and guarantee the due process of all those with open cases, or who are serving sentences for political reason in that country.

The Socialist International considers Manuel Rosales's decision to return as a new mark of the determination and efforts undertaken by the leaders and members of the opposition forces united together in the *Mesa de Unidad Democrática*, in order to achieve the realisation of free and just parliamentary elections on 6 December this year.

The Socialist International calls to respect the right of assembly and the freedom of speech of UNT militants, supporters of Manuel Rosales and citizens of Maracaibo, who have already announced their mobilisation on the occasion of the arrival of the opposition leader.

IPU

SI Meeting at the 133rd Assembly of the IPU in Geneva

18 October 2015



During the 133rd Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) held in Geneva from 18 to 21 October, the Socialist International held its regular meeting of parliamentarians belonging to SI member parties to exchange views on the main issues on the agenda of the IPU, and to share information on developments within their own countries. Parliamentarians from SI member parties in Angola, Belgium, Czech Republic, Dominican Republic, Finland, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Hungary, India, Iraq, Italy, Mali, Mauritius, Mongolia, Morocco, Namibia, Niger, Pakistan,

Palestine, Romania, San Marino, South Africa, Spain and the United Kingdom, attended the meeting, as well as from Sri Lanka as guests.

The dominant theme of this Assembly's discussions was that of Migrations and how to implement a fairer and more humane way of dealing with this phenomenon. The emergency item of debate also focused on the protection of refugees and ensuring compliance with international and humanitarian law. The SI Secretary General, who chaired the SI meeting, recalled the extensive discussions on these issues that had been taking place at different levels within our International and made specific reference to the Charter for the Rights of Migrants that had been elaborated by the SI Committee on Migrations and adopted by the SI Council at its last meeting in July 2015. In the discussions on these issues, participants highlighted different aspects from their national perspectives. A common thread in the contributions was that whether dealing with regular migration, which was a constant, or with refugees, what we were dealing with in essence was human beings and it was the responsibility of all governments to protect them and to respect their dignity. Particular attention was paid to the plight of the most vulnerable, including women and children.

The need to tackle the root causes of mass migration and growing numbers of internally displaced people and refugees was emphasised and a call was made for more decisive and effective action by governments and international bodies to achieve fair and lasting solutions not only in regard to conflict resolution, but also in the fight against poverty and unemployment.

Another aspect that was highlighted, related to ensuring respect for the general rules of labour laws. In relation to migrants and refugees, it was pointed out that issues surrounding the right to work, exploitation of domestic labour, women and children needed to be further addressed, as well as trade union rights for migrants.

Among the reports on national situations, the meeting heard from the Palestinian representative on the deteriorating situation between Palestine and Israel, and from the chairman of the IPU's Middle East Committee. Here again the underlying causes of the conflict were highlighted as fundamental issues that could only be resolved with the equal will and commitment of both sides.

Participants also received a report on the worrying situation in Iraq from the head of the PUK delegation in the Iraqi parliament, who underlined the need for international solidarity. The country was struggling to cope with the threat of ISIS, it had four million internally displaced people and women and girls were being kidnapped and trafficked in growing numbers.

The meeting also welcomed a report on the recent elections in Guinea, which saw the return to power of President Alpha Condé at the head of the second democratic government of that country.

At the conclusion of the meeting, emphasis was put on the importance of international bodies in bringing people together and promoting common solutions. In the SI we stood for multilateralism and solidarity.

Also stressed was the need for more politics, which was about values and ideals, which were in deficit today in many places around the world.

Mediterranean

Meeting of the SI Mediterranean Committee, Barcelona, Spain

26-27 October 2015



On 26-27 October 2015, the SI Mediterranean Committee convened in Barcelona, Spain, under the heading **“For an end to conflicts – For peace in the Mediterranean”**, hosted by the SI member party in that country, the PSOE. The Committee’s discussions focused on three aspects of the main theme: 1) Addressing the human tragedy with humane solutions; 2) Developing and promoting political initiatives; and 3)

Advocating and rebuilding regional cooperation.

Opening the meeting, the Committee chair, Carme Chacón (PSOE, Spain) warmly welcomed all participants to Barcelona, the city that connects Spain with the Mediterranean and which is itself a mixture of cultures. She spoke of one of the worst crises faced by the region, that of refugees fleeing conflict, who needed urgent assistance. It was equally incumbent on us all to do everything possible to stabilise the situation in the areas of conflict both to achieve peace and progress in the region and to enable the millions displaced to return home. She highlighted the need to recapture the spirit of dialogue that had led to the Barcelona process of 1995, for greater efforts to be deployed to redress the inequality that exists on both shores of the Mediterranean, and for true multilateral action based on an equal footing.

During the opening session, the SI Secretary General commented on the increase in conflicts in the Mediterranean region that have led to the current humanitarian crisis, conflicts also resulting from inaction in the face of inequality, bad governance and lack of democracy. The hesitation shown by governments in Europe in dealing with what is in effect a 1% of the global figure of refugees and forcibly displaced persons was lamentable. We look back with nostalgia at the concept of regional cooperation encapsulated in the Barcelona Project of 20 years ago, but lessons needed to be learned and a new diagnostic had to be made, with new goals and new approaches. Today we were experiencing a deficit of tolerance and cooperation which we needed to counter by more visibly promoting the political values we stand for in our International.

As an introductory speaker on **“Addressing the human tragedy with humane solutions”**, Umut Oran from the CHP, Turkey, a Vice-President of the SI, described the open door policy of Turkey since 2013, which today hosted over two million Syrian refugees. This had coincided with an increase in economic problems in Turkey, however free health care was provided. The lack of schooling led to unacceptable human conditions such as child labour, early marriage and street begging, and the informal Syrian work force increased tensions with the local population. The government was failing to deal with the problems due to the lack of a coherent refugee policy or long-term perspective, although it was clear that the conflict in Syria would not end any time soon. He underlined the global nature of the crisis and the consequent need for a global response.

On the question of migrations, the Committee also heard a contribution from Moavia Achament Mochamentin, a native of Sudan today working at the head of the Greek Forum for Migrants, who described the local conditions faced by migrants upon arrival in Lesbos and pointed out that 80% of the workers there were volunteers. The volume of migrants was greater than portrayed by the media and was growing, medical treatment was almost non-existent and there was scarce food and shelter. He described the tensions between the refugees themselves which fell mainly in two camps, the Arab and the non-Arab speakers. The situation was out of control, the flow of refugees was increasing too rapidly for institutions to respond to, and there was no sign of the situation improving.

During the discussions, participants highlighted the realities concerning refugees fleeing past and present conflicts experienced in various countries of the region, including Syria, Egypt, Lebanon, Cyprus, Israel, Palestine, Tunisia, Greece, Western Sahara and Morocco. The role and duty of social democrats was underlined in facing the rising xenophobia and the extremist approaches to this issue in some EU countries, as was the imperative of addressing the underlying political problems that lead to conflict and the need to foster internal dialogue. Looking ahead, the importance of providing education for refugees as a preventive measure against radicalisation and organised crime was also noted.

In this context, SI Vice-President Ahmed Ould Daddah, leader of the RFD Mauritania, pointed out that the issue of refugees was nothing new in the history of human existence. Today the responsibility lay with those governments that have failed to create reliable democracies and economic development, and with the big powers who supported them for their own interest. If we don't change the methods and the goals, we will be crying crocodile tears. We should leave the beaten path and speak openly about the origins of the crises to address the true causes.

The second sub-theme of **“Developing and promoting political initiatives”** was introduced by Mustapha Ben Jaafar, leader of Ettakatol, Tunisia, and an Honorary President of the SI, who underlined the need to go back to the central ideas of the Barcelona project for peace, security and shared prosperity, as outlined by this committee at that time. That Process had led nowhere, as all efforts had concentrated on commercial projects, leaving aside the politics, in order to avoid differences. He highlighted the positive things about the recent Tunisian experience while noting the difficulties faced. Civil society involvement had led to the current progressive situation based on consensus but vigilance was required to ensure democracy.

The longstanding unresolved conflicts in the region, along with the more recent ones, were addressed, and the Committee heard valuable contributions from participants from both Palestine and Israel and from representatives from both communities in Cyprus. In relation to the situation of Western Sahara, the Committee followed up on the report by the SI Mission that was presented to the last SI Council.

Introducing the third sub-theme **“Advocating and rebuilding regional cooperation”**, Mohamed Abdelkader of the USFP, Morocco, observed that the Mediterranean was a longstanding area of rivalry between super powers and conflicts contained for decades had returned with great violence. In the 20 years since the Barcelona Declaration the opposite of its purpose had been achieved and all efforts to integrate the Maghreb had failed. There was inequality and mistrust in the relations between the two shores. The non-resolution of old conflicts remained an obstacle to progress, and security in the region would only be achieved with a tangible improvement in the lives and welfare of the people. He proposed the creation of a task force to define our vision and provide a common reference framework.

Participants at the meeting also had the opportunity to share information on the internal situation in their respective countries and parties: on the work of the PSD in Andorra, the situation in Egypt following the elections, the prospects for overcoming the conflict in Syria, the political situation in Palestine and preparations for the forthcoming Fatah Congress, the internal situation in Israel on the 20th anniversary of assassination of Yitzak Rabin, the current situation in Cyprus, in Lebanon, and latest developments in Tunisia.

Before the conclusion of the meeting, the Secretary General informed the committee of the news he had just received from Ramallah of a knife attack on Mustapha Barghouti. He would convey the sentiments of solidarity of the committee members.

Following the debates, the Committee adopted a Declaration **“Building Peace and Responses to the Refugee Crisis”**, reflecting the points discussed and views shared by all participants.

**BARCELONA DECLARATION:
BUILDING PEACE AND RESPONSES TO THE REFUGEE CRISIS**

Democratic socialist parties from the Mediterranean region gathered for a meeting of the Socialist International Mediterranean Committee in the city of Barcelona on 26 and 27 October 2015, under the heading 'For an end to conflicts – For peace in the Mediterranean.'

This meeting takes place at a crucial moment for the Euro-Mediterranean region for three reasons. Firstly, it is the 20th anniversary of the Barcelona Declaration, the founding document of a project of co-operation between the EU and the twelve countries on the southern shore of the Mediterranean. Secondly, the grave refugee crisis that has been afflicting our region in recent months calls for urgent and effective solutions to contain the greatest humanitarian crisis since the Second World War, and thirdly, because of the number and complexity of the open conflicts that are causing deaths and the displacement of people in a several of countries of the region.

As Mediterranean socialists, we recognise that the creation of the Barcelona Process at the 1995 Euro-Mediterranean Conference, and subsequently the Union for the Mediterranean, were important initiatives at their respective times which helped establish a forum for political dialogue and social and economic co-operation in a complex region. However, the problems and crises in different parts of this region obstruct these initiatives, although the Mediterranean Committee continues to consider them absolutely necessary for dealing in a concerted manner with the challenges that confront us.

The Mediterranean is experiencing one of the worst crises in its history: the refugee crisis. Hundreds of thousands have arrived in Europe after crossing Mare Nostrum, fleeing from war and torture in their countries of origin. Many of them have lost their lives in the attempt or have disappeared in its waters. It is a human and humanitarian tragedy, in the face of which we, as socialists, cannot and must not stand aside with folded arms. We understand that we must attend to the needs of those who have justified reasons for seeking asylum in Europe, while at the same time we must try to remove the root causes of the problem: the war in Syria which has been going on for more than five years, the barbaric terrorism of Daesh/ISIS, the lack of democracy and bad governance in many countries that inhibits the opportunities and prospects of the young people of the region.

Our priority is the achievement of three aims: peace and stability, democratisation, and prosperity. Our region's potential is weighed down by different conflicts, some of which are long-standing and still without resolution, like that of Israel and Palestine, the division of Cyprus or the question of Western Sahara, and others that are more recent, like Libya and Syria. We consider it necessary to continue working together, on an equal footing, to advance political initiatives that would lead to peace in our region, through regional co-operation, political dialogue and a global vision that goes beyond questions of security.

On the other hand, we want governments on both shores of the Mediterranean that are committed to the democratic principles of the Rule of Law, free, transparent and honest elections in every country, and full respect for basic rights and public freedoms.

In turn, we also have to press for actions to promote prosperity and redistribution in our countries, through co-operation for development, including social and business initiatives.

To achieve this, the member parties of the Socialist International Mediterranean Committee propose the following measures and actions to confront the refugee crisis and to move forward with the peaceful resolution of the conflicts in the region:

1. We call for an effective and collective response from the European Union to the arrival of the refugees: all the member States must fulfil their commitments and deal more rapidly with the redistribution of asylum claims. This is an ethical responsibility that must be taken up in order to be consistent with the defence of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The EU must show solidarity in supporting countries like Greece, which is currently suffering a double crisis: economic and humanitarian.
2. We condemn the violations of human rights and legal obligations by States in connection with this crisis – and ask the European Union and the international community to be forceful in their

- vigilance. We commit ourselves to fighting against the mafias involved in human trafficking and those parties whose xenophobic and anti-immigrant discourses are inflaming European societies.
3. We believe it necessary to give support to the refugees in the countries that border on the Syrian war, especially those in Turkey, where the majority of are, but also those in Lebanon and Jordan. Large-scale resources are needed to run the refugee camps, as well as to guarantee the provision of education to all those young people who have had to flee their countries, because it is the best weapon against radicalisation.
 4. We ask the international community to engage in direct, collective action to halt the war in Syria and to search for a way to bring peace and stability to the country, so as to allow a return to the logic of politics, urgently beginning a transition to democracy that will allow the refugees to return to their homes. We appreciate and value all those forces struggling on the ground against the barbarous terrorism of the so-called 'Islamic State'.
 5. This Committee is very concerned at the current political situation in Egypt following the last parliamentary elections and at the governmental repression of political parties and civil society. Similarly, we value and support the efforts of our sister party the ESDP in their struggle to establish a genuine and inclusive democracy in the country.
 6. We are closely following the current efforts to bring an end to the division of the island of Cyprus, and consider of great importance the confidence-building and other measures based on our principles and values and the resolutions of the United Nations to reach a solution to the problem of Cyprus.
 7. We express our deepest concern over the escalation of violence in Israel and Palestine, and regret the absence of a meaningful diplomatic process leading to the recognition of the State of Palestine within the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital. We call on the parties to halt all violence and to re-engage in constructive dialogue for a just and lasting solution to this conflict, based on the Declaration adopted by the Socialist International Council in New York in July 2015. In this regard, the Committee has decided to initiate contacts with the Democratic Party in the United States, as a privileged interlocutor, to explore ways in which we can collaborate to bring this solution forward.
 8. We intend to continue working with our member parties to promote a solution to the question of Western Sahara, in a constructive spirit and using ideas from the report of the Socialist International Mission that took place in May of this year - a report that was approved by broad consensus - in the search for a political solution within the framework defined by the United Nations.
 9. We welcome the agreement to form a transitional government of unity in Libya, sponsored by the representative of the United Nations Secretary General, and we express our support for the EU and the international community so that they try to consolidate reconciliation in a key country of the region in a serious, staunch and constructive way.
 10. We applaud the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to the Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet, in recognition of the all the Tunisians and political forces of the country who demonstrated that it has been possible to initiate a transition to democracy through dialogue and negotiation. However, this process is still fragile and we in this Committee call on all progressive forces and those in civil society to be vigilant in the face of attempts to go back on the successes achieved in the revolution and the Constitution.

Lastly, the member parties in this Committee wish to recall the spirit that 20 years ago launched the Barcelona Process, and we consider that, despite all the difficulties involved, it is necessary to return to the basic ideas of peace, stability and prosperity shared by countries on both shores of the Mediterranean, in order to put an end to the conflicts and inequalities, and to be able to offer a present and better future for our citizens.

France

Socialist International condemns terrorist attacks in Paris

14 November 2015

The Socialist International is deeply shocked and saddened by the horrific multiple terrorist attacks carried out last night in Paris by ISIS, which have left 129 dead and many injured. We send our heartfelt condolences to the families and friends of the victims, our sympathy to all those who endured this heinous crime, and our solidarity with the entire French nation as it comes to terms with these events.

The Socialist International underscores its firm support for and solidarity with President Hollande and his government as he firmly and decisively acts to confront this concerted scourge of terror that has hit France, and takes the necessary measures to protect its citizens. This despicable act of terror in Paris is an attack against peace-loving people everywhere and against the values common to open, democratic societies which respect the freedoms and rights of all, irrespective of race or religion.

In the Socialist International we stand together with the French people today, as we stand, shoulder to shoulder, against terror and disregard for human life and in defence of universal human rights and the values that unite civilizations the world over.

Mali

SI solidarity with Mali and President Keita following terrorist attack in Bamako

20 November 2015

The Socialist International is deeply saddened by the barbarous terrorist attack in Bamako early this morning, which has resulted in the death of numerous civilians in a hotel in the capital. Our heartfelt thoughts and condolences are with all those who are suffering and grieving as a result of this cowardly act of terror against innocent people with no chance to defend themselves.

This attack is also an attack against democracy and against the efforts of the government and people of Mali to move the country forward. President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita is a leader that has made us all proud in our International, for his statesmanship, courage and commitment to securing a way forward for peace, democracy and economic progress for all the people of Mali.

While expressing our solidarity with the President and his government, and full support for our member parties in that country, the RPM and ADEMA-PASJ, we underline once again the need for and importance of a comprehensive, united and decisive response by the international community to terrorism, to bring an end to these crimes which have hit so many innocent people in so many places of the world.

Council

Meeting of the SI Council in Luanda, Angola

27-28 November 2015



The Socialist International held its second Council meeting of 2015 on 27-28 November in Luanda, hosted by the MPLA, its member party in Angola. Delegates converged in Angola's capital representing SI member parties and organisations from across Africa, Europe, Latin America, Asia and the Middle East. The meeting addressed the main themes of "Working for global stability, peace and security in times of crisis", "Struggling for equality and common progress in an interdependent world", and "COP21 – Our goal for a universal binding agreement, common commitments, differentiated demands and precise objectives".

The meeting opened with a minute of silence, in memory of all those who had recently lost their lives in acts of terror around the world. This support and solidarity was also reflected in a declaration later adopted outlining the SI position with regard to the terrorist threat.

Another major declaration was addressed at the COP21 conference in Paris, due to open just two days after the Council. In it were set out the aims and priorities of the International for a universal binding agreement, with common commitments, differentiated demands and precise objectives.

The meeting was opened by the Secretary General of the SI, Luis Ayala, who highlighted the global nature of the challenges we face today, be they conflicts in any corner of the world or the struggle for freedoms and rights anywhere. The Council meeting was a manifestation of the commitment of the SI to find responses to global challenges, to secure peace, democracy, equality and human rights and to tackle terrorism and climate change. Around the world, members of the SI had been elected to advance this agenda. He thanked the host party for their hospitality and congratulated all Angolans on the recent anniversary of their independence.

SI President George Papandreou, in his opening address, also paid tribute to the people of Angola on the fortieth anniversary of their country's independence, noting how since the end of its civil war it had become a flourishing democracy free from outside interventions, that was internationally engaged both in the Great Lakes region and on the UN Security Council. He reflected on the interdependence of humanity's problems, with the refugee crisis linked to terrorism, insecurity and inequality. He underlined that military action against terrorists could only be effective in tandem with a plan for peaceful transition.

Delegates were warmly welcomed to Angola by Julião Mateus Paulo, MPLA Secretary General and a Vice-President of the SI. He recalled the 500 years of colonial history that had preceded independence in Angola, and the long civil war that followed, and outlined the path taken by the government for development since 2002. He outlined how there existed new military, economic and social tensions on an international level, and that Angola was searching for a durable peace in Africa and engaged in initiatives in the Great Lakes region.

On the first main theme, Manuel Augusto, Secretary of State for international relations of the government of Angola, outlined the engagement of the country in the international sphere in favour of peace processes, in particular in Africa. During the discussions, delegates representing countries recently touched by terrorism spoke with great dignity and solemnity. The Council was informed of steps taken by President François Hollande and President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita in response to the recent terrorist acts committed in Paris and Bamako, with representatives of their parties underlining their determination to overcome this scourge and appealing for the solidarity and support of those present and the international community in this struggle.

The breadth and quality of the interventions underlined the will and determination of all those present to fight terrorism in all its forms and make the world a more peaceful, stable and secure place. In addition to the detailed declaration of the Council on this theme, a separate declaration on the refugee crisis was adopted, which acknowledges the link between conflict and terrorism and the flows of migrants seen across the world today. The declaration urges the international community and European Union to fulfil their ethical responsibility faced with almost unprecedented refugee flows.

On the theme of equality, a broad range of views was heard advocating equality in many forms – both between the richest and poorest within societies, between developed and developing countries, and between different genders and social groups. Delegates outlined the challenges faced in ensuring that the benefits of development reach all sectors of the population, as well as the importance of the role that social democracy would have to play in this process. The diverse contributions during the debate underlined the important work that will be undertaken by the SI Commission on Equality, which will meet during 2016 to define approaches and priorities of the social-democratic movement in the struggle to eliminate inequality in the global economy.

The timing of the Council just days before the opening of the COP21 Summit in Paris gave an opportunity to address a strong message for an outcome to the climate negotiations built on social democratic ideals and the move towards a sustainable world society. Fátima Jardim, environment minister of Angola, gave an introduction to the debate, underlining the commitment of her country to a positive result at the summit and the steps it was taking in regard to its own emissions reductions. In addition to the declaration of the Council on climate change and COP21, the secretary general reported that the SI would have a presence in Paris, in order to ensure that the social democratic voice and its proposals would be heard during the talks.

The Council gave a particularly warm welcome to the recently released political prisoner Mikalai Statkevich, who was incarcerated in Belarus for four years and eight months on false charges, following the fraudulent presidential election of 2010, with much of that time spent in solitary confinement. He recounted the circumstances of his arrest and imprisonment to the Council and thanked the Socialist International for its sustained efforts to secure his release from prison.

Recognising the fraternal hospitality of the host party and the milestone that this year represents in the history of Angola, The Council adopted a declaration marking the historical struggle and civil war in Angola, and the progress made towards peace and reconciliation since it was brought to an end. A statement was also adopted in relation to the upcoming legislative elections in Venezuela.

The Council heard a report of the meeting of the SI Ethics Committee held in London in October, and its recommendations regarding applications for membership and changes to membership status. The Council



*Julião Mateus Paulo,
Secretary General of the
MPLA*

approved the upgrading to full membership of the Belarusian Social Democratic Party (BSDP), Egyptian Social Democratic Party (ESDP), Nationwide Social Democratic Party (OSDP, Kazakhstan), Progressive Democratic Party (PDP, Paraguay) and A New Era (UNT, Venezuela). The new member parties admitted to the organisation were the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP, Iran), as a full member, and the Social Democratic Party (TDP, Cyprus) and Democratic Union Party (PYD, Syria) as consultative members. The Arab Social Democratic Forum became an associated organisation of the Socialist International.

The Council equally approved the report of the SI Finance and Administration Committee and adopted the budget for 2016. The Committee's report included an update on the payment of fees, a condition for membership which, in accordance with the statutes, is ceased if these are not paid for three years.

At the closing of the meeting, the Secretary General thanked the host party for their hospitality and said that the SI would take the principles and positions of the organisation forward at the COP21, where members would be the following week. The SI President closed the meeting by stating that in a time of paradox and contradictions, politics must not be confined to national borders but needed to be international and inclusive, to combat division, hate, populism and xenophobia. There was no way to solve problems by hiding behind walls, and it was the task of all those present to continue to work together for a better world.

Climate Change

SI Declaration on climate change and COP 21

29 November 2015



Meeting of the Council of the Socialist International
Luanda, 27-28 November 2015

Declaration on climate change and COP 21

Following discussions on climate change and the COP21 Summit at the Council meeting of the Socialist International in Luanda, delegates recognised the growing acknowledgement of climate change as the single greatest threat to the future of humanity, and the need for urgent and meaningful action from all the nations of the world. The Paris Summit may well be the last opportunity to avert a global catastrophe and the Council outlined the vision of the Socialist International for a universal binding agreement, common commitments, differentiated demands and precise objectives, calling for:

1. More ambitious emissions targets to restrict global temperature rise to 2°C;
2. An outcome centred on climate justice;

3. Financing for the Green Climate Fund to 2020 and beyond;
4. Extra assistance for adaptation measures in countries already suffering the effects of climate change;
5. An end to fossil fuel subsidies;
6. Concerted action to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation;
7. Initiatives in favour of more efficient agriculture and responsible consumption;
8. The introduction of a global carbon tax;
9. A climate agreement in harmony with the Global Goals;
10. Robust measurement, reporting and verification of progress towards emissions reduction targets.
11. The Socialist International, its member parties and Council delegates to take concrete actions to reduce their own environmental impact.
12. Representatives of SI member parties to take the lead in Paris.

1. Current commitments are not enough

The UN has received emissions targets in the form of Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) from countries responsible for more than 90 per cent of global emissions, which indicates a willingness from the majority of nations and governments to work towards a global agreement in Paris. However, the pledges made are only enough to limit the global rise in temperature to 2.7° to 3°C, a level far in excess of the goal of 2°C set out in the Copenhagen agreement. Ambition needs to be raised, and any agreement in Paris needs at a minimum to include mechanisms for the upward revision of emissions targets if we are to have any chance of meeting the 2°C target for global temperature rise. This means the establishment of a five-yearly cycle under which countries have an obligation to ratchet up their commitments, making progressively tighter emissions reductions. Countries need to supplement their commitments by developing and adopting Deep Decarbonization Pathways (DDP) in order to guarantee a zero carbon future for the planet.

2. Climate justice and common but differentiated responsibilities

The principle of climate justice originates within our movement and has always been at the heart of our climate policy. The SI continues to support the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, in recognition of the duty of developed countries to do more and go further in their commitments as a result of their historical responsibility for greenhouse gas emissions.

3. Financing and the Green Climate Fund

One potential obstacle to ambitious targets is the issue of finance. The Green Climate Fund (GCF), which sets aside finances for climate change mitigation and adaptation, is therefore a crucial plank of any climate agreement. Though important steps have been taken to secure initial funding for the GCF, the total pledged is nowhere near enough and the agreements reached in Lima at COP20 do not set out a clear time frame for the scaling up of funds. The gap between the amount currently pledged and the \$100 billion per year promised after 2020 needs to be bridged. The lack of a clear pathway has been interpreted by some developing country partners as a sign of a lack of commitment to the GCF by Annex I parties. Without significant progress, the negotiations in Paris will take place in an atmosphere of mistrust from those countries that will be depending on the fund in the years to come. An agreement on where the funding will come from post-2020 is therefore indispensable for an agreement with the necessary level of ambition.

4. Extra help for adaptation where it is already needed

It is important to recognise that the effects of climate change are already being felt in many countries, and disproportionately so in the world's least developed economies. It is therefore necessary to ensure that adequate funding is given not only to climate mitigation, but also adaptation. The regrettable need to invest in costly measures to mitigate against the effects of climate change in vulnerable areas should serve as a wake-up call that failure to act now, while there remains a chance to avert extreme climate change, will prove much more costly in the long-term.

5. End fossil fuel subsidies

If goals to reduce carbon emissions are to be met, it is imperative that our dependence on fossil fuels is ended. For this to be achieved, it will be necessary to begin the process of systematically abolishing all fossil fuel subsidies, which encourage over consumption of energy and are a great obstacle to progress. This needs to be a carefully managed process, implemented in such a way as not to harm development.

The objective should be to replace fossil fuel subsidies with clean energy subsidies, through investments in the green economy that will provide long-term benefits both economically and environmentally.

6. Reduce emissions from forestry (REDD+)

The agreement reached at COP21 must bring about reductions in greenhouse gas emissions from all sectors, including deforestation and forest degradation, which account for nearly 20 per cent of the global total. We reiterate our support for the REDD+ mechanism, which aims to create a financial value for the carbon stored in forests, and offer incentives for developing countries to reduce emissions from forested lands through investment in low-carbon paths to achieve more sustainable development. REDD+ further includes the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks.

7. Reduce emissions from agriculture

Reducing emissions from agriculture has a significant environmental benefit, as the sector is directly responsible for more than 10 per cent of all human-caused greenhouse gas emissions. Emissions reduction measures can also improve efficiency, which reduces costs and saves money. Work also needs to be done on public awareness of the importance of emissions from the production of the food we eat, in order that consumers are able to make better and more environmentally sound choices.

8. A global carbon tax

A global tax on carbon would encourage governments, businesses and citizens to reduce their reliance on carbon emitting resources. The proceeds of such a tax could be used to enormous benefit, for reducing the cost of energy from alternative sources, financing climate change mitigation and adaptation measure and promoting sustainable development as a route to ending poverty. Creating a relationship between the carbon cost of the food we eat and its monetary cost would also be an effective tool to encourage the switch to a more environmentally sustainable diet.

9. An outcome that reflects the Global Goals

Our vision of a sustainable future equally includes the pursuit of the Global Goals, which were agreed at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit in New York in September. Achievement of goals on eradicating poverty, reducing inequality, achieving gender equality and building a more secure world go hand in hand with a willingness to tackle climate change, which can exacerbate many of the difficulties faced in the developing world.

10. Measurement, reporting and verification

Previous attempts to reach an agreement have met difficulties in part because of a lack of confidence that countries are sincere in their commitments to reduce emissions. For this reason a robust system of measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) is needed, Where developing economy nations lack the capability to effectively and accurately measure their emissions, technological and logistical resources and expertise should be shared to enable MRV.

11. Individual responsibility

The SI Council feels that the fight to prevent irreversible climate change is important from a personal as well as a political and governmental perspective. For this reason, SI member parties resolve to take concrete actions to reduce their impact on the environment and encourage their members to do the same. In this way, our movement can lead by example in its actions as well as its policies. In line with this commitment the Socialist International will seek to reduce the environmental impact of its own meetings, exploring ways to reduce the use of printed materials through electronic distribution of documents.

12. Taking the lead at COP21

Without strong commitments in Paris, the future of the planet looks bleak. We believe that by following the above framework, COP21 can be the moment when the world unites to move towards a sustainable world society. The Council therefore particularly calls on SI member parties who are in government to work tirelessly at the summit for an outcome built on social democratic ideals.

Venezuela

A New Venezuela

7 December 2015

The Socialist International has been present in the political life of Venezuela in a direct and constant way for many years, alongside the democratic and progressive forces of the country. This presence has always been determined by our commitment to democracy, human rights and social progress.

Today, as a result of this commitment, three full member parties of the International, Acción Democrática, Voluntad Popular and Un Nuevo Tiempo, form part of the *Mesa de Unidad Democrática*, a broad opposition platform, and are key players in the results obtained in the elections for a new Parliament that took place yesterday.

The *Mesa de Unidad Democrática* has already won a great victory, the final details of which will be confirmed in the coming hours. The *Mesa de Unidad Democrática* is today ready to assume responsibility for the creation of a project for all Venezuelans, within the framework of full respect for human rights and democratic freedoms, in order to achieve an authentic social transformation.

The Socialist International's presence in Caracas yesterday during the elections, with a delegation headed by its Secretary General, is a demonstration of the permanent commitment of our organisation to the values of democracy and freedom.

Along with congratulating all Venezuelans on this day of democracy, the Socialist International greets the historic triumph of its member parties and their allies in the *Mesa de Unidad* and renews its commitment to accompany their efforts in the new process that begins today.

Climate Change

SI at the COP21 in Paris

9 December 2015



Political will for ambitious targets

The SI President and Secretary General held a press conference today at the COP21 in Paris. They presented the positions adopted by the organisation at its recent Council meeting held in Angola in regards to the COP21 and underlined the political will of the member parties of the Socialist International worldwide for achieving ambitious targets at the

Conference to tackle climate change. This press conference followed a meeting held earlier that day of ministers, heads of delegation and other political representatives present at the COP21 from parties belonging to the Socialist International, where an informal exchange of views was held on the process underway at the Conference in Paris.

Climate Change

Socialist International greets Paris Agreement

14 December 2015

The Socialist International enthusiastically welcomes the Paris Agreement, approved unanimously by almost 200 countries at the COP21 climate change conference in Paris on Saturday. A universal agreement on this scale is unprecedented, and the end result of more than 20 years of climate talks under the UNFCCC. Its adoption signals a consensus among all countries of the world about the serious and immediate threat posed by climate change, and a recognition that concerted action is required by all countries to address its causes.

The SI welcomes in particular the new commitment to keep temperature rises “well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C”. The agreement also underlines the importance of equity and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities in the implementation of the agreement, reflecting the diversity of national circumstances.

Negotiations in Paris have succeeded where previous summits have fallen short, and it is important to recognise the hard diplomatic work over many days and nights that has gone into making an agreement happen. The SI warmly congratulates President François Hollande, who created the political conditions for this Conference in Paris to be the defining moment for this crucial Agreement, and applauds the exceptional role played by COP21 president Laurent Fabius, without whose tireless efforts, experience and leadership in the negotiation process, an agreement would not have been possible. We equally recognise the dedication and commitment of Ségolène Royal, an SI vice-president and French Minister of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Energy.

The agreement is a turning point in the fight against climate change, but will require sustained effort and commitment in its implementation. It equally remains the case that despite the ambition to work towards limiting global temperature rises to 1.5°C, the pledges made by countries to date through their INDCs (Intended Nationally Determined Contributions) are insufficient to even reach the higher target of a 2°C rise. In this regard, the newly agreed review mechanism, whereby a global stocktake will take place every five years from 2023, is of vital importance. This five-yearly review must be used not only to monitor the progress made towards existing targets, but also to increase ambition and bring about progressively tighter emissions reductions.

Equally important is the commitment to mobilise climate finance of USD 100 billion per annum up to 2025. The Agreement echoes the view of the SI that developed countries should bear the most responsibility for climate finance, taking into account the needs and priorities of developing countries. We welcome the commitment to set a new collective quantified goal prior to 2025 from a floor of USD 100 billion, which will take into account the needs of developing countries at that time.

The SI now calls on all countries, having signed the accord, to enshrine their obligations under the Paris Agreement in their national legislation as a further sign of their commitment to honouring each and every one of the promises made at COP21. Doing so will further strengthen this historic agreement and make it more binding.

The SI has long been actively engaged in the search for a global response to climate change, both through the work of its Commission for a Sustainable World Society and with the inclusion of the issue on the agenda of its Council and Congress meetings, most recently in Luanda in November. SI member parties in government have been encouraged to work together for an outcome with the social democratic principle of climate justice at its heart, the importance of which was recognised in the Paris Agreement. The SI was present at the COP21 through its President and its Secretary General, and an informal exchange of views took place with ministers, heads of delegation and other political representatives attending the COP21 from parties belonging to the Socialist International where these principles were reaffirmed.

If nations continue to show the political will that was needed to reach an agreement in Paris, the SI believes that this will mark the end of the age of fossil fuels and a definitive step towards a zero-carbon future. The world is now on a clear pathway to a greener, fairer and more sustainable planet and the SI and its member parties will continue to be at the forefront of efforts to deliver the promises made in Paris in their entirety.

Guinea

SI present at inauguration of President Alpha Condé

December 2015

Socialist International Secretary General Luis Ayala with President Alpha Condé of Guinea



Burkina Faso

SI at the inauguration of President Roch Marc Christian Kaboré

December 2015

SI Secretary General Luis Ayala with President-elect Roch Marc Christian Kaboré



Venezuela

SI present as new National Assembly of Venezuela is sworn in

January 2016



Burkina Faso

SI condemns terrorist attack in Ouagadougou

16 January 2016

The Socialist International vigorously condemns the terrorist attack carried out last night in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, which has left 28 people dead from many different countries, responsibility for which has been claimed by Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. Our thoughts are with the family and friends of the victims.

126 hostages were rescued by security forces following an operation to reclaim the hotel where the attack happened, during which a number of terrorists were killed.

The Socialist International expresses its wholehearted solidarity with newly elected President Roch Marc Kaboré who assumed office at the end of December, and with his government and people. This is the third major terrorist attack to take place in 2016, following those in Istanbul and Jakarta earlier this month, and we reiterate once more our call to the entire international community to join forces to bring an end to this international scourge against humanity.

In their efforts faced with this tragedy in Burkina Faso, our International stands firm alongside President Kaboré and his party, the MPP, members of our political family.

Turkey

SI supporting CHP in their work for a Turkey with freedoms, rights and democracy

16-17 January 2016



On the occasion of the 35th Congress of the Republican People's Party, CHP, of Turkey, held in Ankara on 16 -17 January 2016, the Socialist International Secretary General attended at the invitation of the party leader, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, with whom he held talks on political developments in Turkey and on the main issues on the party's agenda. The SI SG conveyed the full support of the International for their work

for freedoms, rights and democracy in Turkey. At this Congress, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu was re-elected as party leader. On 17 January the SI Secretary General attempted to visit Can Dunder, the chief editor of Cumhuriyet, a national daily paper, and their Ankara correspondent, Erdem Gul, held at Silivri Prison outside Istanbul since November 2015 without formal indictment in a case receiving broad public attention as a grave infringement of freedom of expression and of the press in Turkey. Sergei Stanishev, President of the Party of European Socialists, PES, who attended the CHP Congress on behalf of that organisation, was also attempting to meet the imprisoned journalists. Members of the CHP, other Congress guests and the lawyer of the journalists accompanied the foreign guests, who were denied access to the prison by the authorities. Members of the Turkish press covered the visit and reported on their impressions. A written message was conveyed to the prisoners whose content, along with their response, were published in the press. Later in the day, the SI Secretary General held talks with leading journalists of Cumhuriyet at the newspaper's headquarters in Istanbul.

Venezuela

Venezuela must respect democracy

18 February 2016

The installation of the new National Assembly in Venezuela in early 2016 was defined by various political actors and the international public opinion as a moment of democratic reaffirmation in this Latin American country. In recent years, countries in this region of the world, as well as in other continents, have expressed their anxiety and concern about the worsening social and economic situation and social cohesion in Venezuela. The deterioration of institutional life, increased violence, persistence of conduct contrary to the values shared by the community of democratic nations, together with the existence of political prisoners, have contributed to deepening this sense of alarm among democrats of different political persuasions in many regions of the world.

However, the elections to the National Assembly last December, beyond their results, confirmed the high degree of mobilisation of society, the strong civic spirit that still exists among Venezuelan people, the faith in democracy as the only path shared by the great majority of citizens of this country, and their confidence in the mechanisms and institutions of the country to resolve the situation, achieve a consensus and find ways to move forward and build a future for all Venezuelans.

Therefore, since the beginning of this year, we and many others have been following with interest developments in the political life of Venezuela, where the Executive must now share and interact, within the democratic framework as we all understand it and as required by the Venezuelan constitution, with another branch of the State, the Legislature, a clear majority of which is overwhelmingly in favour of dialogue and a mutual respect for diversity, and willing to build an inclusive way forward for all citizens.

However, a new and serious anomaly has arisen in the framework of Venezuelan democracy, despite the recent developments that led to the installation of this new National Assembly. It has distanced Venezuela from the democratic and institutional order required by its constitution and from the clear and legitimate mandate granted by the people at the elections last December.

The Supreme Court, whose members were replaced in the last few days of the previous legislature, after the new composition of the National Assembly became known, is now overriding the latter's sovereign will and ignoring its decisions, becoming a kind of second chamber not provided for in the constitution, as demonstrated in recent days when it approved the economic emergency decree and the special powers which President Maduro granted himself, although this had previously been expressly rejected by the Assembly.

The Socialist International today raises its voice in defence of democracy in Venezuela, calling for the desire for change expressed at the polls by the citizens of this country, the separation of powers and the National Assembly to be respected and, on a day like today, which is the second anniversary of Leopoldo López's political imprisonment, while Manuel Rosales and Antonio Ledezma, as well as other citizens, continue to be deprived of their freedom for political reasons, we welcome the approval of the Amnesty and Reconciliation Law by the National Assembly on its first reading.

Uganda

In support of democracy in Uganda

22 February 2016

In recent years the people of Africa have continued advancing and moving forward democratic governance in an important number of countries of the region. Today, more and more people in that continent enjoy freedoms and rights, a precondition for progress, development and peace.

Members of the Socialist International in a good number of countries in Africa have been protagonists and actors of an era of change that has been bringing new opportunities and a new face to the political life of the continent. Nevertheless, authoritarianism, oppression and other evils of the past still linger in the political life of some of the countries in the region. In some cases this has led to open conflicts, or at the very least to a culture of political stagnation, despite the growing collective consciousness that democracy is the only way forward.

The presidential election held in Uganda this past weekend which retained Yoweri Museveni in power is unfortunately an example of those negative cases. Elections in which opposition candidates are oppressed, social media is shut down, the main contender from the opposition is arrested several times during the campaign and the electoral process is flawed with disruptions and irregularities, cannot and should not be accepted. Added to that, Uganda has for some years now, been managed by Museveni as if it were his private domain.

Uganda has definitely joined the list of countries in Africa where there exists a greater contrast with those that, despite a troubled history of colonisation and unfair economic international relations, have managed to achieve multiple democratic gains in current political developments in Africa. Definitely, people throughout the continent, as other members of the international community, should stand up today for the rights of the Ugandan people. We in the Socialist International are firmly on their side.

Belarus

The SI in Belarus

February 2016



The Socialist International, represented by its Secretary General, was present in Belarus for the central committee meeting of the Belarusian Social Democratic Party (Narodnaya Hramada), held in Minsk on February 28. Mikalai Statkevich, who was released from prison last August where he had been detained as a political prisoner since 2010, was re-elected Chair of the party. Discussions centered on the continuing struggle for a free, democratic Belarus to achieve stability, justice and rights for the Belarusian people.

Nepal

Socialist International SG in Nepal

March 2016



SI Secretary General, Luis Ayala



Sher Bahadur Deuba

Nigeria

National Chairman of All Progressives Congress, APC, Nigeria, meets SI Secretary General in London

9 March 2016



All Progressives Congress, APC, National Chairman Chief John Odigie-Oyegun (left) and SI Secretary General Luis Ayala (right)



Head of the UK Branch of the APC, Philip Idaewor (left), with Chief John Odigie-Oyegun (right) and SI Secretary General Luis Ayala (centre)

IPU

SI meeting held at the 134th Assembly of the IPU in Lusaka

20 March 2016



The SI held a meeting of parliamentarians from its member parties on the occasion of the 134th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, IPU, which took place in Lusaka, Zambia, from the 19th to the 23rd of March 2016. Participants, attending from all continents, also included a number of Speakers and Deputy Speakers of Parliament and Leaders of Parliamentary Groups

from our political family.

The meeting held discussions on issues of particular concern to members in regard to current international developments, the contribution of our movement to democracy at both global and national level, conflict resolution, the fate of refugees and the migration phenomenon, and an exchange of views on items on the agenda of the IPU Assembly.

The meeting, chaired by the SI Secretary General, included parliamentarians from member parties and organisations from Angola, Algeria, Austria, Belgium, Burkina Faso, Chile, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Hungary, Italy, Mali, Morocco, Namibia, Nepal, Nigeria, Lesotho, Palestine, Portugal, Russian Federation, São Tomé and Príncipe, South Africa, Spain, Turkey and Venezuela, as well as a representative from The Global Fund.

In their exchange of views, participants touched upon aspects of the issues for debate by the IPU Assembly, and in particular, they examined the choice of emergency items due to be voted on. The Deputy-Speaker of the National Assembly of France introduced the motion which they had submitted relating to the 230 million unregistered children in the world. The representative from Morocco presented the motion submitted by their national delegation on the process for international recognition of a sovereign Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital. The third emergency item relating to human trafficking, presented to the IPU by Sudan, was also noted.

In a round of interventions, all participants had the opportunity to address and share information on issues of concern to their party or country. The meeting heard reports on the latest political developments in a number of cases, including where there were new governments from our movement as in Burkina Faso and Portugal, and the situation in Nepal where a new constitution had just been agreed; the challenges faced by the Palestinian people in their quest for an independent state and respect for their human rights; the challenges to democracy such as those experienced by the new parliament in Venezuela vis-à-vis the country's President, the ongoing political crisis in Haiti which needed much more attention from the international community, or the situation in Turkey and the role of our members, political developments in Guinea-Bissau and in São Tomé & Príncipe; an update on Russia, and equally information on the current situation in Czech Republic and Hungary. There was also a contribution on the prospects in Spain to form a new government following the last elections.

The issue of terrorism was of major concern among the contributions, as highlighted by the representatives from some of those countries most recently affected, namely Nigeria, Mali and Burkina Faso. The President of the National Assembly of Burkina Faso expressed appreciation and thanks to the Socialist International for its solidarity at a crucial time, and stressed the need for joint efforts to combat terror.

The pressing issue of refugees and internally displaced people was highlighted by many, and in its discussions the meeting agreed to reiterate the SI's unequivocal position on this subject: namely the need to

firmly defend the human rights and physical integrity of all refugees and asylum seekers in line with international norms and United Nations conventions; to underline the illegality of all forms of collective deportations; to recall that the poorest countries are burdened with the greatest number of refugees while noting that richer countries invest large sums in border controls; to stress the imperative to combat all forms of xenophobia and racial discrimination, and to draw attention to the values on which the EU was founded. Amongst the key challenges noted were taking measures to defend those who are most vulnerable, namely women and children, and the obligation of every member of the international community to aid and protect.

In the meeting's discussions, the question of gender equality in politics was also commented on by several participants, including information on new instances where more women had reached higher positions of responsibility. During the IPU Assembly in Lusaka, the SI also attended the meeting of women parliamentarians.

During the discussions it was registered by many participants the value of these meetings held by the International.

While in Lusaka, the SI Secretary General also paid a visit to the headquarters of the SI member party in Zambia, the ruling Patriotic Front, where he held a meeting with Davies Chama, their Secretary General.

Belgium

Socialist International condemns terrorist attacks in Brussels

22 March 2016

The Socialist International condemns without reservation the cowardly and indiscriminate terrorist assault on innocent civilians in the heart of Brussels and at Zaventem airport, and expresses its deepest sympathy and solidarity with the victims of these despicable acts, the local emergency services, and all the people of Belgium. We extend our sincere condolences to the families and friends of those killed and to all those who have suffered trauma and injuries in the explosions that struck Belgium's capital today.

The SI equally stands in support of its socialist members in Belgium, the government of the country and all its institutions as they come to terms with this attack and take measures to catch the perpetrators and protect citizens. We look forward to the apprehension of all those responsible for the planning and execution of today's bombings and for justice to be carried out.

Now is a time for all decent people around the world to unite in defence of the universal values of freedom, tolerance and peace, and reject the chaos, destruction and fear caused by terrorism. These acts are above all an attack on our way of life, and the number of major terrorist attacks in recent months in different locations around the world has demonstrated that this is a threat which requires a united global response.

The Socialist International once more calls on all its member parties and the entire international community to join in a comprehensive response to terrorism in order to eliminate this scourge without sacrificing the fundamental freedoms and rights that these attacks seek to undermine.

Pakistan

SI Solidarity with the Pakistani people

28 March 2016

The Socialist International expresses its solidarity with the people of Pakistan as they come to terms with the horrendous terrorist attack carried out yesterday near Lahore. Over 70 people lost their lives as they enjoyed a Sunday afternoon in the park, including numerous women and children, and over 300 were injured.

We strongly denounce this violent act, as we have other such terrorist attacks in Pakistan and elsewhere. Our thoughts and condolences are with the family and friends of the deceased and our sympathy is with all those injured and suffering as a result.

The Socialist International stands shoulder to shoulder with its member party, the Pakistan Peoples' Party, PPP, and with all peace loving people in Pakistan.

Latin America and the Caribbean

Meeting of the SI Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

1-2 April 2016



Nicolás Monegro

The Socialist International Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean held a meeting in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, on 1-2 April 2016. The agenda centered on two main themes: “Building alliances and coalitions to advance our objectives of sustainable development, fair progress and opportunities for all” and “Improving the electoral systems and processes in the region”. The Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD), whose leader, Miguel Vargas, is chair of the Committee, hosted the meeting. The opening session included the participation of Danilo Medina, President of the Dominican Republic and candidate for re-election in the forthcoming polls to take place in May.

Opening the meeting, Miguel Vargas thanked the parties of the Socialist International for their presence in Dominican Republic at a very special moment for the country that will be holding general elections on 15 May. For these elections, he explained, the PRD and the PLD signed an agreement last September for a shared government of national unity, an alliance which draws inspiration from the ideals and the vision of their historical leader, José Francisco Peña Gómez. The two largest Dominican progressive political forces have reached an understanding to give the country a majority government that will allow it to develop a broad reform of the State, with measures that will guarantee social inclusion, a substantial improvement of the public services and address the outstanding institutional reforms.

The SI Secretary General, Luis Ayala, thanked the hosts of the meeting and recalled his participation, as a witness, in the signing of the agreement for government last September. It's strength comes from the coherence of shared values and principles of both parties and, at the same time, it is an alliance consistent with Dominican political history. It also reflects the will of political actors that are not restricted by their own benchmarks but instead are able to respond to the needs of the nation and the expectations of its citizens. Luis Ayala expressed confidence in their victory on 15 May and in a government committed to ensuring welfare, justice, inclusion and opportunities for all Dominicans. He shared with the participants the concerns and the work of the International in these times "of big challenges and definitions". The responses to the challenges for peace, democracy, sustainable development, greater equality, extending solidarity with the plight of refugees and migrants, are today key tasks for the International in the whole world, as it is also in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The President of the Republic and presidential candidate in the forthcoming May elections, Danilo Medina, in his intervention, warmly welcomed the presence of the Socialist International in Santo Domingo. He thanked Miguel Vargas for having signed with him a unity agreement without precedence in the history of the country, in favour of social gains, wellbeing and peace for all Dominicans. In his party's principles, President Medina said, there are elements that are common to the member parties of the SI in the region, a region that is growing, innovating, lowering the levels of poverty and advancing in guaranteeing social rights within a democratic framework. To face the challenges in education, housing, health, social protection, today it is necessary to build large political majorities that will be able to respond to the social demands of the country, he affirmed. The adequate reply to these demands is not the anti-politics nor the populisms, he said, but a process of building alliances between political forces with common principles and projects, such as the one that now exists in his country.

On the first main theme of the agenda, "Building alliances and coalitions to advance our objectives of sustainable development, fair progress and opportunities for all", the Committee heard contributions by participants from Nicaragua, Uruguay, Venezuela, Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, Guatemala and Argentina. In their interventions they recalled that at different historic moments in their respective countries, the progressive parties have known the experience of forming governing coalitions. Many times these alliances were inspired by the



search to regain lost democracy or to advance by means of political agreements to overcome situations of violence and conflict. What characterises the current political alliances in the region is that generally these are appearing within a context where there is democracy and peace, and rather than being agreements to overcome situations of crisis, they represent the identification of common political aspirations as a basis upon which to build agreements between parties to ensure the fulfilment of their goals and these are presented to the citizens as shared programmatic proposals. This is a reality that goes beyond the simple electoral agreement and involves the search for common objectives. In their different contributions, the delegates conveyed to the host party, the PRD, their confidence that this policy of alliances will be greatly

validated in the coming elections and their wish that the next shared government of national unity succeeds with important achievements in favour of a better life for all Dominicans.

The Committee heard to an intervention by Mitzy Capriles de Ledezma, wife of the principal Mayor of Caracas, Antonio Ledezma, one of the political prisoners in Venezuela detained since more than one year. Her words, she said, were on behalf of all the women and families of prisoners being held for political reasons in her country. She denounced the arbitrary measure of deprivation of freedom that today affects her husband and so many other Venezuelans. She thanked the member parties of the Socialist International for the permanent support given by the organisation to her country and shared with the Committee her wish and hope to see very soon Antonio Ledezma and all the Venezuelan political prisoners released from prison.

The SI President, George Papandreou, expressed that Latin America and the Caribbean are very close to his heart, as he has himself experienced dictatorship and exile. The democracy which has been gained globally, is a system that must be defended and guaranteed wherever and whenever it is under threat, he maintained. In this sense, the policies of alliances have a strong justification when they look to regain democracy. But democracy is also consolidated when political parties that share common principles and projects are moved to act together against inequality and to respond to global challenges such as climate change, sustainable development, or the phenomenon of refugees and migrants, and to formulate common, democratic and responsible proposals, thus lessening the threats of authoritarianism, populism and fundamentalism. George Papandreou spoke of the refugee crisis and the current austerity policies in Europe, adding that the democratic and social model in that continent that in the past served as inspiration for the progressive forces in this part of world, could benefit from observing today's experiences in this region.

In the debate on the second main theme, "Improving the electoral processes and systems in the region", the Committee heard contributions from Mexico, Costa Rica, Panama, Peru, Dominican Republic, Venezuela, Paraguay and Argentina, based on the experiences in their own countries and developments in the institutional and regulatory fields. All participants highlighted the importance of having electoral and party laws that are modern and suited to their own realities. A common factor is the need to have an autonomous electoral body that is impartial, permanent, materially well provided for and not subject in their budgets to a payroll of employees and the appointment of top authorities motivated by the swings of their own electoral contingency. Regarding the use of electronic and technological means for the registration of the electorate, their identification and the voting itself, there were common views that the advances in these matters could be a very important contribution for the legitimacy and efficiency of the processes, but it was also noted that it is insufficient to make the credibility of the citizens during the electoral process solely dependent on them. Other aspects considered and that must be taken into account were the financing of politics, whether this is public, private or mixed, the limitations to campaign expenses and the accountability of candidates. Venezuelan participants, for their part, emphasised the relevance of the role of international electoral observers, the regulation of re-elections and the nature of administrative sanctions to avoid the de-registration of candidates, following the recent experience in their country.

On the last point of the agenda, the delegates spoke of the political situation in their respective countries. Besides that of the Dominican Republic, which was widely explained during the meeting, the Committee heard from the Venezuelan delegates about the latest political developments in their country following the approval in recent days of the Amnesty and Reconciliation Law promoted by the political forces of the *Mesa de Unidad Democrática* (MUD) in the Venezuelan National Assembly; from the Brazilian delegate on the situation confronted by the government of President Dilma Rousseff; the delegate of Peru gave an update to the Committee on the electoral prospects in the forthcoming elections to be held in that country; the SI Vice-President and representative of Haiti informed about the challenges faced by the government and the provisional presidency of the Republic with a view to the realisation of elections; the delegate of Chile informed about the state of the advancement of reforms contained in the programme of President Bachelet; the delegation of Costa Rica informed about the current internal work of his party PLN and its future projection; the delegate of Panama referred to the work of his party and the importance that it assigned to the modifications of electoral laws and parties in his country; and the UCR of Argentina shared with the Committee its experience during the first months of coalition government. From Europe, the delegate of the PSOE updated the Committee on the latest advancements and the perspectives that the

leader of the party, Pedro Sánchez, finds in his efforts to form a coalition government under the leadership of the socialists in Spain.

Before the closing of the meeting, the SI Secretary General, Luis Ayala, updated the Committee on the latest activities of the International and the new and forthcoming initiatives. He referred, among other matters, to the work ahead in the coming months by the Commission established by the International to examine inequality in the world economy and propose specific policies to combat it in the developing world, in emergent economies and the developed countries. At the close of the debates, the Committee approved a resolution on the agreement of shared government in Dominican Republic, another about the situation in Brazil and another on the current political and institutional crisis in Venezuela, and reiterated the appreciation of everyone present for the fraternal hospitality received from its member party in Dominican Republic, the PRD.

CIS, Caucasus and Black Sea

SI calls for an immediate end to the confrontation between Azerbaijanis and Armenians

4 April 2016

The Socialist International has followed with great concern the hostilities and attacks that have taken place in the last 48 hours between Armenians and Azerbaijanis with a regrettable loss of numerous lives.

Our International calls for an immediate ceasefire and for an end to these hostilities, and at the same time reiterates the urgent need for a resumption of dialogue within the framework of the Minsk Group, a body accepted by both Armenia and Azerbaijan and recognised by the multilateral organisations, to resolve through negotiation and in accordance with the principles of international law, the longstanding conflict in Nagorno-Karabagh.

The absence of a perspective for a solution in the prevailing atmosphere of belligerence and armaments build up has led to the current hostilities. Our International reiterates the need for a greater commitment by the international community as a whole to bring its influence to bear in favour of peace between Armenians and Azerbaijanis.

On the basis of the dialogue which has been carried out within our International by our member parties in Armenia and Azerbaijan, we call on them to actively contribute to this process.

Venezuela

SI denounces ruling against amnesty and reconciliation law in Venezuela

12 April 2016

The Socialist International denounces the grave disregard of the sovereign will of the Venezuelan people and the usurpation of powers by the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court of Justice (TSJ) of the country, which yesterday declared as unconstitutional the Amnesty and National Reconciliation Law that had been approved by a majority in the National Assembly on 29 March this year.

The resounding electoral victory in the elections to the National Assembly at the beginning of December 2015 was based on a clear proposal to the people: an amnesty law which would facilitate and enable the normalisation of political life in Venezuela and the reconciliation of its society. Three months after assuming their functions, the representatives in the National Assembly honour their commitment and at the

same time they are prevented from complying with the wishes of the Venezuelan people by a strongly questioned TSJ whose powers appear to be dominated by the party in office.

The International also profoundly regrets that the regime of president Nicolás Maduro, rather than accepting the offer extended by the opposition to advance a dialogue starting with a law that sets free the prisoners of conscience and permits the start of a normalisation of the country, instead ignores this opportunity, and takes refuge in authoritarian institutional bodies which are favourable to the regime, delaying the gaining of a greater democracy, which sooner or later will happen in Venezuela.

To the great majority of Venezuelans who last December expressed themselves in favour of change in the country, the International reiterates its solidarity and unwavering commitment with the cause of Venezuelan democracy. Faced with situations like these, the response should not be one of alienation or scepticism. Democracy is the only way to build a Venezuela which is more free, more just and with better opportunities for all. We will always be on the side of the Venezuelan people in all their efforts to achieve these objectives.

Gambia

SI denounces criminal crackdown of demonstrators and arrest of SI member party leader in Gambia

16 April 2016

The Socialist International denounces in the strongest terms the violent repression in recent days by government security forces in Gambia, of demonstrators demanding electoral reform and the right to free speech, and the arrest today of Ousainou Darboe, leader of the SI member United Democratic Party (UDP) of Gambia, following the storming of his home, and the rounding up and detention of other party officials and supporters who had gathered there.

Before his arrest, Darboe had denounced the violent crackdown of demonstrators and declared that they would go to claim back those detained and demand the handover of party organisation secretary Ebrima Solo Sandeng amid reports that he had been tortured to death under detention for taking part in the demonstrations.

Darboe declared that the demonstrators had done nothing wrong and were simply exercising their constitutional right, adding that he, along with other members of the party, would demand the release of their detained comrades, including a number of women, who are reportedly seriously injured.

The Socialist International is profoundly concerned and strongly condemns the violence and grave human rights violations perpetrated by the government against the political opposition in Gambia and demands a total clarification of the fate of UDP organisation secretary Ebrima Solo Sandeng and others arrested with him, and the immediate release of UDP party leader Ousainou Darboe and his colleagues.

Our International calls on the relevant authorities in the African Union and the United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights to act urgently to protect the rights of all those today under serious threat in Gambia. The Socialist International also calls on its member parties in government to make representations to the government of Gambia for the immediate release of Ousainou Darboe and all those under detention. We equally call on all members of the international community to remain alert and vigilant to developments in Gambia, where President Yahya Jammeh, a former military officer who originally seized power in a coup in 1994, is known for repressing the opposition.



Ousainou Darboe, arrested leader of the UDP, at the offices of the SI in London at a meeting with the Secretary General of the SI, Luis Ayala

The Socialist International will do its utmost to contribute to the realisation of the aspirations and goals of its member party and other democratic forces in Gambia for the development of a society with freedoms and rights and an effective democracy. Presidential elections scheduled for December this year must become, for the first time in the political history of the country, truly free and fair.

Equatorial Guinea

The long road to democracy

26 April 2016

It came as no surprise to anyone when the president of Equatorial Guinea's National Electoral Commission made his first announcement of preliminary results following the presidential elections held in that country on Sunday 24 April. With some 10 percent of the votes counted, the results reflected a 99.2 percent in favour of the incumbent President Teodoro Obiang who has ruled the country for the past 37 years. Nobody needs to wait for the final results, which are expected to be released in three days' time, as the outcome will show little difference. Every previous election held during his tenure has resulted in between 95 and 99 percent in his favour.

The main opposition party, the Convergence for Social Democracy (CPDS), a member party of the Socialist International, along with the coalition of the Democratic Opposition Front (FOD), boycotted the elections, branding them as not credible due to the lack of democratic conditions and the persistent harassment and intimidation of the opposition.

Despite the country's oil wealth, the people of this small nation continue to suffer widespread poverty, inequality, injustice and lack of opportunity. Opposition forces, such as the CPDS, are stifled and prevented from engaging in the political life of the country. Under these conditions and the resulting repressive environment, elections are strictly controlled, cannot be trusted and cannot be considered democratic.

Obiang will certainly be declared the winner of these elections, by the president of his National Electoral Commission Clemente Engonga Nguema who at the same time serves as the Interior Minister and First Deputy Prime Minister of his government, thus extending his term in office by another 7 years, until 2023.

For the people of Equatorial Guinea, the long road to democracy continues. Our International stands in solidarity with them, with its member party, the CPDS, and all the other democratic opposition forces striving to make their voices heard. The international community should take notice and the world should heed their call.

Bulgaria

SI in Bulgaria

May 2016



SI Secretary General with Kornelia Ninova, new chairwoman of the Bulgarian Socialist Party elected at the party's 49th Congress, 7-8 May 2016

Dominican Republic

SI delegation observes elections in Dominican Republic

14-16 May 2016

A delegation of the Socialist International was in the Dominican Republic from 13 to 16 May to observe the Presidential, Parliamentary and local elections held in that country on Sunday 15 May. The alliance, including the PLD and the SI member party, the PRD, has won a majority in these elections and the incumbent President, Danilo Medina, has been re-elected in the first round of voting with close to 62% of the vote.



Roberto Rosario, president of the Central Electoral Board (centre left) with members of the SI delegation, SI Secretary General Luis Ayala (centre right), Bernal Jiménez, SI Vice-President, PLN, Costa Rica (left) and Victor Benoit, SI Vice-President, Fusion, Haiti (right)



Some of the members of the SI delegation (from left to right): Jorge Farfán (APRA, Peru), Luis Florido (VP, Venezuela), Bernal Jiménez, (SI Vice-President, PLN, Costa Rica), Peggy Cabral (PRD, Dominican Republic), Luis Ayala (Secretary General of the SI), Victor Benoit (SI Vice-President, Haiti), Edgar Zambrano (AD, Venezuela) and Timoteo Zambrano (UNT, Venezuela)

DR Congo

SI Secretary General meeting with the leader of the Union for Democracy and Social Progress, UDPS, of the Democratic Republic of Congo

24 May 2016

Mardi 24 mai 2016 à Bruxelles Son Excellence Dr Étienne TSHISEKEDI WA MULUMBA Président Élu et Président du Parti a reçu en audience, le Secrétaire Général de l'Internationale Socialiste Monsieur Luis AYALA



Commission on Inequality

Defeating inequality in the world economy - a global plan of action

3-4 June 2016



The Socialist International Commission on Inequality held its first meeting on 3-4 June 2016 in Brussels, hosted by the Socialist Party of Belgium, PS. The Commission had been established by the SI to put forward new ideas, innovative concepts and policies to defeat inequality in the world economy. With a view to drawing on the accumulated experience at the helm of government on matters related to the issues in the remit of the Commission, its membership includes a number of current and former heads of state and government and other leaders drawn from all continents.

Attending the meeting were: leader of the host party and chair of the Commission **Elio Di Rupo**, former Prime Minister of Belgium and an SI Vice-President; **George Papandreou**, SI President and former Prime Minister of Greece; **Luis Ayala**, SI Secretary General; and Commission members **Laura Chinchilla**, former President of the Republic of Costa Rica; **Eero Heinäluoma**, former Deputy Prime Minister of Finland, former Finance Minister and former Speaker of the Parliament, and SI Vice-President; **Ricardo Lagos**, former President of the Republic of Chile; **Marian Lupu**, former President of the Republic of Moldova, former Minister of the Economy, Leader of the Democratic Party of Moldova, PDM, and SI Vice-President; **Richard Parker**, Professor of Economics and Public Policy at the University of Harvard, former advisor to Senator Kennedy, former President of Americans for Democratic Action, ADA, from the Democratic Party, USA; **Anand Sharma**, former Foreign Minister and of Trade and Commerce of India, Deputy Leader of the Indian National Congress and Deputy leader of the INC parliamentary group in the Indian Parliament; **Mohamed Bazoum**, Minister of the Interior of Niger and President of the Party for Democracy and Socialism of Niger, PNDS, participating on behalf of Commission member **HE Mahamadou Issoufou**, President of the Republic of Niger; and **Ajay Bramdeo**, representative of the African Union, on behalf of Commission member **Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma**, Chairperson of the African Union Commission. The Commission also includes **Saleem Mandviwalla**, former Finance Minister of Pakistan, Senator of the Pakistan People's Party, PPP, and Chairperson of the Committee on Finance of the Senate of Pakistan.

Over the course of the two-day meeting, participants were in agreement that inequality represents one of the most serious challenges undermining our democracies, our societies and our common future, and that the main objective of the Commission was to define concrete steps that the social democratic movement could take to reduce inequality. In this first meeting, participants identified a number of overarching concepts in relation to inequality, and underlined that a coordinated global effort would be necessary to

confront and reverse increasing economic inequality within and between societies, countries and regions of the world.

Participants were unanimous in their support for the notion that access to education is a powerful tool to reduce inequality in future generations. Reducing inequality requires the defence of free education in the developed world, where it is coming under increasing threat, and a redoubling of efforts to expand education provision in the developing world, with particular emphasis on those previously denied education in the past, namely the poorest in society and girls. Commission members observed however that the young generation in many countries was already the most highly educated in history, but continued to struggle due to the lack of opportunities for meaningful and secure employment. Education for all is a prerequisite for a more equal society, but not a cure for all the diverse causes of inequality.

Concern was thereby expressed over the prevalence of jobless growth, which has led to many of those who are able and qualified to work being denied the opportunity. Discussions on employment also incorporated the related issue of trade and workers' rights, which are closely linked to inequality. The erosion of workers' rights is a major cause of global inequality and trade agreements need therefore to include basic standards of rights for workers, which will also enable democratic governments to push back against the efforts of huge transnational companies to use their economic power to exert influence over governments, leading to a worsening in working conditions.

A clear link was identified between action on climate change and addressing inequality, which represent the two most crucial tasks in the 21st century. The inequalities in the world economy are also reflected in the disparity in per capita emissions between developed and developing countries, and their responsibility for historical emissions. It is also the case that the principle well known to climate change negotiations of common but differentiated responsibilities can be applied to tackling inequality. Although action on inequality is necessary everywhere, due to diverse starting points and stages of economic development the exact nature of this action is highly differentiated.

The differentiated approach that would be required in order to tackle inequality was a key feature of the discussions, with participants bringing local perspectives on the most pressing issues facing their countries and regions. This was an ample demonstration of the importance of the diverse composition of the Commission, which is a great strength. It was stressed that there is no one size fits all approach to tackling inequality, and that therefore the conclusions of the Commission must respect the different challenges faced in different continents.

Participants from the EU and the US noted the impact of the great recession on levels of equality, as a result of post-recession growth accumulating disproportionately in the hands of the already wealthy. The problem of wealth concentration in the hands of the richest one per cent persists, and is relevant on both a regional and global level. One proposed solution to this injustice was the exploration of ways to increase taxes on capital, which is currently taxed at a lower rate than income in many jurisdictions.

In Latin America, the problem of inequality is of paramount importance, as a result of a failure to significantly reduce inequality despite economic development and rising average incomes. For the members of the Commission, this demonstrates why in many ways measures such as GDP per capita are given too much pre-eminence when it comes to determining which economies are successful. Once annual incomes get beyond a threshold of approximately \$20,000 per capita, there is a much stronger correlation between the level of economic equality and general well-being than between total income and well-being and this was one of the motivating factors behind the support of the Commission for efforts to give additional prominence to the Gini coefficient in order to embed income distribution as a measure of development.

The concept of economic justice is a vital principle for many developing countries, particularly in Asia, where 60% of the world's population live, and development remains the key to poverty reduction. There, raising incomes is a vital first step to reducing inequality. Nonetheless, participants stressed that inequality is not simply a question of income but also very much relates to the provision of food security, healthcare and education.

Commission members from Africa raised the issue of the link between conflict, insecurity and inequality. Inequalities on an international level exacerbate poverty, which is a source of conflict. A lack of security also undermines efforts by democratic governments to implement the policies that would bring about a reduction in inequality. These challenges are particularly acute in the Sahel region of Africa.

As a result of this first round of discussions on tackling global inequality, the Commission members agreed on a series of fundamental policies that need to be put into effect to deliver a reduction in inequality. These included the need to end tax havens; implement more progressive taxation; explore ways to tax capital at a higher rate than wages where applicable; create a link between GDP and Gini coefficient as a measure of prosperity; reaffirm the crucial role of education as a prerequisite for reducing inequality; end discrimination on the grounds of gender, nationality and ethnicity; reform international institutions in order that they reflect contemporary realities; couple economic justice with climate justice and a reduction in emissions; intensify the struggle against corruption; tie minimum wages to median income; and pursue conflict resolution to bring the stability needed to reduce inequality.

The Commission will hold its next meeting in Niamey, the capital of Niger, at the invitation of Commission member HE *Mahamadou Issoufou*, President of the Republic, in the first half of September. The Niamey meeting will build, deepen and continue the discussions, advancing in the preparation of a comprehensive report on inequality. The forthcoming SI Council in Geneva in July will include discussions on the theme of inequality, during which the global membership of the SI will have the opportunity to contribute to this debate and the development of the Commission's report.

Council

Meeting of the SI Council at the United Nations in Geneva

1-2 July 2016



The Council of the Socialist International convened at the United Nations in Geneva on 1-2 July 2016. Its discussions focused on three main themes: 'Strengthening the political and humanitarian response to current international crises', 'Defending and securing democracy: supporting the struggle for rights and freedoms

where they are under threat', and 'The need for an economy that works for all - defeating inequality in the world economy'. The meeting began with a minute's silence in sympathy with the victims of the recent terrorist attack at Istanbul's Ataturk airport and their families, and other innocents who have lost their lives in terrorist atrocities across the world. The Council also issued a declaration on the attack.

A return to the *Palais des Nations* building was the occasion for the SI to reaffirm the ways in which its global vision and objectives had much in common with those of the United Nations, as outlined by Luis Ayala in his opening remarks. The SI Secretary General, underlining the core belief of the SI in multilateralism, peace and universal rights, recalled that the Council was being held in the same room where years ago the UN Commission on Human Rights used to meet, and where he had at that time been present as a member of the democratic opposition to the military dictatorship in Chile. He outlined that the SI was ready to take on the challenges of working for peace, democracy and solutions to humanitarian crises. In light of the forthcoming XXV SI Congress, which he announced would take place in December 2016, he drew attention to the question of inequality in the world economy, which would be a major theme at that gathering.



Michael Møller, Director-General of UNOG

Participants were welcomed to UNOG by Director-General Michael Møller, who expressed his appreciation that the SI had once again chosen to meet at the heart of International Geneva, focusing on the global challenges that were also at the centre of the United Nations agenda. He outlined his belief that the model of governance focused on States was being challenged by new actors in civil society, the private sector and academia. This mind shift, towards dealing with issues in a strategic and inclusive manner, was demonstrated by the adoption in 2015 of a historic roadmap for humanity by all UN member states, towards a sustainable world for future generations.

SI President George Papandreou addressed the Council at its opening, with a call for the SI to exert its voice around the world at a time when it was becoming more and more important for a strong social democratic movement that could seize the initiative on global issues. He identified the question of global inequality as an area in which cross-border cooperation and partnerships were vital, underlining the importance of the work of the newly established SI Commission on Inequality. Papandreou spoke out on the plight of refugees, and the need to counter the prevailing negative narrative, which fed into nationalism and insecurities. Speaking as a former refugee, he outlined how refugees should be seen as an investment in future relations with other countries and in building democracy around the world.

The need for a combined political and humanitarian response to global crises was reiterated by many of those who addressed the Council on its first theme, who considered the crises caused by conflict, forced displacement and terrorism, and the steps required to face up to these enormous challenges. There was a consensus that political and humanitarian approaches needed to be combined, with multilateral cooperation playing an indispensable role in the solution. The discussions on this theme were reflected in a Council declaration on the political and humanitarian response to current international crises.

The exchanges on global crises incorporated many different perspectives. During the first session of the Council, a number of representatives of political forces from Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran presented their respective assessments of the humanitarian and human rights situation they faced. These reflections contributed to some of the declarations and resolutions later adopted by the Council, amongst them, one on the Kurdish region. Representatives of SI member parties in Israel and Palestine also contributed to the debate, and a declaration on the Palestinian question was adopted. In relation to the first theme, the Council also adopted declarations on the definitive ceasefire agreement in Colombia, the peace process in Cyprus, calling for a peaceful and lasting solution in Western Sahara and responding to threats to peace and security in Libya and Niger.



Amre Moussa, former Secretary General of the Arab League

On the theme of democracy, Amre Moussa, attending the Council as a special guest, gave a keynote address. The former secretary-general of the Arab League considered that the SI had an important role to play in facing the growing social, economic, political and security challenges. When it came to the Arab world, he added, there could be no return to the status quo ante. A new regional order, with an enhanced role for the UN Security Council was needed to bring about the requirements of peace and peaceful negotiations, responding to the aspirations of the people.

Delegates to the Council contributed to the debate with perspectives on the situation with regard to democracy in their respective countries. The vibrancy of the statements made was reflected in Council declarations on a number of specific countries later adopted. These include declarations on democracy in Belarus, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, The Gambia, Tunisia and Venezuela.

Elio Di Rupo, Chair of the SI Commission on Inequality, reported on the first meeting of the commission held in Brussels on 3-4 June, emphasising that the SI had the capacity to propose a progressive response to the inequality present in the world economy. He called for action to reduce the vast disparities, which were epitomised by the fact that the richest 80 billionaires in the world had the same combined wealth as the poorest 50% of the global population. Members of the Commission on Inequality Marian Lupu, former President of Moldova, an SI Vice-President, and Eero Heinäluoma, former Speaker of the Finnish Parliament and SI Vice-President, also addressed the Council on this theme as well as representatives of other SI member parties who spoke in support of its objectives, offering their personal perspectives on what the SI could do to contribute to a reduction in inequality.

The chair of the Ethics Committee, Jean-Paul Buffat (PS, Belgium), reported on the meeting of the committee on the eve of the Council. The Council approved the proposals of the committee to upgrade the Social Democratic Party of Azerbaijan (SDPA) to full membership and the National Union for Democracy and Renewal (UNDR, Chad) to consultative membership, and to admit the People's Movement for Progress (MPP, Burkina Faso) as a full member party.

The Council received a report from the co-chair of the Finance and Administration Committee, Maurice Poler (AD, Venezuela), on the current financial situation of the organisation and approved the audited accounts presented. All those parties with outstanding membership fees were reminded of their financial obligations and of the need to adhere to the stipulations in the SI statutes to preserve their membership in the Socialist International.



France

SI condemns terrorist attack in Nice and stands together with France

15 July 2016

The Socialist International vigorously condemns the despicable terrorist attack carried out last night during the Bastille Day celebrations in Nice that took the lives of at least 84 men, women and children, and left scores seriously injured.

This horrific attack continues the path of successive acts of terrorism against innocent people in France and in other countries across the world, as extremists seek to generate a climate of fear and undermine democracy and the rights and freedoms people everywhere have fought to achieve. Our political family stands today as one in denouncing these crimes. Our resolve to act together against terror is strengthened as we reiterate the Socialist International call for a comprehensive international response to eliminate this scourge, in defence of open, democratic societies.

The Socialist International extends its heartfelt condolences to the families and friends of the victims. In this dark hour we stand firmly alongside the people of France, who have our full solidarity.

Turkey

SI condemns coup attempt and supports democracy in Turkey

16 July 2016

The Socialist International condemns the attempt by military forces in Turkey last night and in the early hours of this morning, to bring down the legitimately elected government of the country.

Our organisation wholeheartedly shares and fully supports the clear and unequivocal statements made by the leaders of the CHP and the HDP, members of our global political family, as the coup attempt unfolds.

Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, leader of the CHP, said that the country had suffered previous coups and these developments should never be repeated in Turkey, adding that his party fully depends on the free will of the people, indispensable to Turkey's parliamentary democracy.

Selahattin Demirtaş and Figen Yüksekdağ, co-chairs of the HDP, declared that no one is above the people's will, and opposed any coup in any circumstance, underlining that there is no other way forward than democratic politics.

The Socialist International, as a global movement of political parties, has always placed democracy as the cornerstone in the struggle for freedoms and rights all over the world. It knows that democracy is the free expression of the people, it needs to be respected and nurtured, requires credible independent institutions including the judiciary, freedom of speech and of the media, and full respect for human rights.

We sincerely hope that these difficult times that Turkey is going through will be overcome, as the country needs a fully functioning democracy for the benefit of its people, of its neighbours and of all democratic nations in the world.

Our International expresses its full solidarity with all those defending democracy in Turkey.

Gambia

SI denounces the sentencing of opposition leader in The Gambia

22 July 2016

The Socialist International firmly denounces and condemns the sentencing of Ousainou Darboe, leader of the opposition United Democratic Party (UDP) of Gambia, an SI member party, along with 18 other party members and sympathisers, to 3 years imprisonment, having been arbitrarily detained since 16 April 2016 following a peaceful demonstration. The SI utterly deplores this travesty of justice and calls for their immediate release. We equally call on the international community to join forces in denouncing the conduct of the dictatorial regime of Yahya Jammeh and calling for an end to the continuing violation of human rights in that country, the physical abuse and murder of detainees in custody as in the case of UDP Secretary Ebrima Solo Sandeng earlier this year, the persistent denial of freedom of expression, and the harassment of members of the opposition by the ruling regime.

The Socialist International reaffirms its full solidarity with Ousainou Darboe and those sentenced with him, with the UDP, and all the democratic forces in The Gambia struggling for their full rights and freedoms and is determined to remain attentive to the situation in the country ahead of the forthcoming presidential elections due to be held in December 2016. The SI reiterates its call to the international community and to regional and international institutions, in particular the African Union and the United Nations, for urgent action in this case.

◆ 23 August 2016

With great sorrow the SI has learned of the death while in jail of Ebrima Solo Kurumah, UDP party member, the second such case in five months. The SI calls for an urgent full investigation into the circumstances of this tragic death. The Socialist International remains extremely concerned about the lives of all those protestors incarcerated as we have now seen two political prisoners of this group who have lost their lives in the last few months.

DR Congo

Delegation of the Unified Lumumbist Party, PALU, meets with SI Secretary General at the SI Secretariat in London

7 September 2016



*SI Secretary General, Luis Ayala, meeting with a delegation from PALU, DR Congo, at the offices of the SI in London
7 September 2016*

Meeting with the SI Secretary General on behalf of PALU are: Gishangu Zubi, Elete Ma Fungula, Justin Pambi, Andre Moreau Bisimwa and Malutanga Mafinamene.

Belarus

Parliamentary elections bring no true democracy and no real change

13 September 2016

Despite the election of opposition parliamentarians for the first time in twenty years, legislative elections in Belarus have not delivered true democracy to the people of that country. The Socialist International reiterates its firm support and solidarity to all those in Belarus engaged in the fundamental struggle for democracy and human rights.

On 11 September 2016, Belarusian citizens went to the polls for parliamentary elections, the results of which are now known. The new parliament contains two opposition MPs, the first elected since 1996, but remains overwhelmingly dominated by those who support President Alexander Lukashenko. Lukashenko has ruled the country since 1994, maintaining absolute power through the systematic repression of the opposition and rigging of elections.

Observers of the parliamentary elections have raised concerns over significant procedural irregularities during early voting, counting and tabulation procedures. In addition, the overall political climate is not at all conducive to the holding of democratic elections, with severe restrictions on the fundamental freedom of opposition parties and candidates to organise and express themselves. The SI believes that under free and fair electoral conditions, many more opposition candidates would have been elected, making the result as presented by the Belarusian authorities a mere gesture to obscure the continuing absence of democracy. Many in the united opposition, which includes the SI-member Belarusian Social Democratic Party (BSDP-NH), view the presence of the two opposition MPs among those elected as an attempt by the regime to create an illusion of democratic progress. It is however clear that two dissenting voices will not be able to exert a great deal of influence in a 110-member chamber that has limited powers under the authoritarian system that prevails in Lukashenko's Belarus.

In light of the clear shortcomings in the democratic process, the SI fully supports the peaceful protests organised by the BSDP-NH and other opposition forces on 12 September in favour of free and fair elections. A prominent voice at these protests was Mikalai Statkevich, chair of the BSDP-NH and former presidential candidate, who was imprisoned by the authorities for four years and eight months following the illegitimate presidential elections of 2010. The SI stood by Statkevich and other Belarusian political prisoners during their incarceration and will continue to advance the democratic cause in Belarus. We encourage the international community to do the same, by maintaining pressure on the Belarusian regime in order to encourage real change.

Presidium

Meeting of the SI Presidium and Heads of State & Government, United Nations, New York

21 September 2016



The annual meeting of the SI Presidium in conjunction with the high-level segment of the United Nations General Assembly took place on 21 September in New York, the eighth such occasion since 2008. The agenda of the meeting focused on the role of the social democratic movement in promoting collective action to confront prevailing challenges to security, democracy and sustainability in different parts of the world and the outcome of the UNGA high-level debate on the crisis of refugees and migrants.

The major focus of exchanges was the recently concluded UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants, with Presidium members united in their recognition of the urgency of coordinated action in response to the global refugee crisis. Contributions underlined the need for a more equitable sharing of the responsibility for hosting and supporting refugees around the world. At present, the greatest burden of the refugee crisis is being felt by developing countries, which are host to the vast majority of international refugees. For this reason the acceleration of progress towards a global agreement on safe, orderly and regular migration was considered essential.

A number of participants stressed that the international community, and in particular the most developed economies, have a collective responsibility and a duty to the refugees of the world, whose lives and livelihoods are threatened by the lack of concrete advances in this regard. At the same time, there remains a vital need for concerted action to address the root causes of the global refugee crisis. In this regard, participants underlined the importance of the work of the SI towards conflict resolution and tackling climate change, which are major drivers of global population movements.

Addressing the first agenda item and the contribution that could be made by the social democratic movement in face of the current global challenges, participants called for a combined strategy for peace and security, sustainable development and human rights. There was a shared conviction that for the challenges of peace, sustainable development and democracy to be met, social democracy would be required, with the SI an indispensable forum for cooperation in pursuit of common goals and objectives. One year on from the SDG summit, a number of interventions highlighted the continued importance of the Global Goals in the realisation of a greener and more peaceful world with opportunities for all, and the vital importance of ensuring the equal participation of women and men in building a sustainable future for all.

Underdevelopment remains a significant factor to migration, and the contributions of President Alpha Condé of Guinea and President Hage Geingob of Namibia identified the continued need for development assistance in their countries and a more equitable sharing of resources on a global scale. They and others considered that socialists and social democrats were uniquely placed to address the gaps between rich and poor, and redress the problems of poverty and economic injustice.

In accordance with the mandate given by the last SI Council in Geneva in July 2016, the Presidium had the responsibility of agreeing a venue for the forthcoming XXV SI Congress. The Secretary General reported that in discussions he had held with the leadership of the SI member party in Colombia, they had expressed the willingness of their party to host the Congress. This would be in line with the established practice within the SI of rotating the regional location of its Council and Congress meetings in order to reflect the global scope of the organisation. He outlined the significance of bringing together the global social democratic family in Colombia, at a historic moment for the country, as a result of the agreement reached between the government and the FARC guerrillas to bring to an end over 50 years of armed conflict. The presence of the SI in Colombia would be a concrete expression of the support of the movement for the courageous decision to bring peace to the country and a continued commitment to the post-conflict process of disarmament and reconciliation.

The proposal to hold the Congress in the city of Cartagena de Indias was overwhelmingly endorsed by the Presidium, with the meeting to be scheduled for the first months of 2017 following consultation with the hosts. The symbolism of the Congress venue and its timing will be reflected by the inclusion of peace as one of the main themes of the Congress, with reference to the successful peace process in Colombia and the need for advances towards peace in other conflicts around the world. The Congress will also focus, as another main theme, on the issue of inequality in the world economy, whose current impact has been a subject of recent work by the SI. Policy proposals on this theme will be presented to the Congress in a report from the SI Commission on Inequality, which is working on concrete initiatives for the reduction of inequality within and between nations.

The Presidium was updated on the response of the FSLN to the concerns transmitted by the SI to the party in regard to the dismissal by the National Electoral Commission of sixteen opposition parliamentarians and twelve alternates in Nicaragua. The Presidium noted that this matter would be further examined and addressed by the relevant statutory organs of the SI.

The current situation in Guatemala was raised, highlighting that a recent decree issued by President Morales restricted fundamental freedoms and rights.

Members of the SI Presidium were joined by President Alpha Condé (Guinea) and President Hage Geingob (Namibia), and SI Honorary President Tarja Halonen, former president of Finland. Also present was

António Guterres, former SI president and ex-UN High Commissioner for Refugees. The meeting was chaired by SI President George Papandreou alongside Secretary General Luis Ayala, with the participation of SI vice-presidents Sükhbaataryn Batbold (Mongolia), Victor Benoit (Haiti), Ousmane Tanor Dieng (Senegal), Elio Di Rupo (Belgium), Alfred Gusenbauer (Austria), Eero Heinäluoma (Finland), Pendukeni Iivula-Ithana (Namibia), Bernal Jimenez (Costa Rica), Chantal Kambiwa (Cameroon), Marian Lupu (Moldova), Rafael Michelini (Uruguay), Mario Nalpatian (Armenia) Umut Oran (Turkey), Julião Mateus Paulo (Angola), Sandra Torres (Guatemala) and Ouaffa Hajji (ex-officio vice-president, SIW). Representatives of the governments of Burkina Faso, Dominican Republic and Montenegro were also present.

Colombia

Standing with Colombia for peace

26 September 2016

The Socialist International greets the historic signing today in Cartagena of the Peace Accord between the government of Colombia and the FARC, successfully concluding a process which began more than four years ago in Havana. Our International is among those accompanying this significant event, maintaining its commitment and support for peace in Colombia today and for the post-conflict period of disarmament and reconciliation.

On 2 October the Colombian people will go to the polls to ratify this accord in a referendum, as approved by the Congress and the Constitutional Court of Colombia, formally bringing an end to more than fifty years of armed conflict that has cost a recorded number of 267,162 lives, displaced entire populations and sowed division and suffering in the country. The people will have the last word, and the Socialist International expresses its confidence that they will overwhelmingly vote in favour of peace.

The Socialist International congratulates all those involved, the President of the Republic and the government of Colombia, the leaders and members of the FARC, the political parties and their leaders and the Colombian people. It further acknowledges the contribution of international organisations, NGOs and other members of the international community in this process.

United Nations

SI congratulates António Guterres on nomination as UN Secretary-General

6 October 2016



The Socialist International offers its warm congratulations to António Guterres, who was confirmed today by acclamation as the formal choice of the UN Security Council as its nominee to become the ninth Secretary-General of the United Nations. The consensus reached is a strong symbol of unity and cooperation. The UN General Assembly is now expected to adopt a resolution confirming his appointment. From a field of many well-qualified candidates, Guterres

became the clear choice to succeed Ban Ki Moon, who will step down on 31 December this year. This

decision by the Security Council follows the most open and transparent selection process in the history of the UN, during which all candidates were subjected to unprecedented public scrutiny.

Guterres is well known to the global social democratic family, having served as prime minister of Portugal from 1995-2002, and president of the Socialist International from 1999-2005. Prior to this he had also been an SI vice-president between 1992 and 1999, as well as chair of the SI Committee on Economy Policy, Development and the Environment (SICEDE). During his presidency of the SI, Guterres placed great emphasis on the necessity for fundamental rights and freedoms to be respected without exceptions, underlining the role of the organisation as a movement for democracy, justice and peace.

Most recently, António Guterres served with great distinction throughout his ten years as UN high commissioner for refugees, during which time he demonstrated his unfaltering commitment to helping those most in need in the world, while maintaining excellent relationships with UN member states, civil society and the private sector. Whilst high commissioner, he also built up the capacity of the UNHCR to respond to some of the largest refugee flows in history. He has equally been a strong advocate of human rights throughout his political career, arguing that there is no peace and sustainable development without respect for human rights.

The SI looks forward to continuing to work closely with and in support of the UN and its new Secretary-General as he takes office in 2017, at a time of great challenges for the international community. Urgent action is needed to address humanitarian emergencies across the globe and bring peaceful resolutions to conflicts, accompanied by a renewed emphasis on crisis prevention. Reform and strengthening of the UN remain crucial objectives. The SI is convinced that António Guterres will be a highly effective Secretary-General, working tirelessly for the peaceful settlement of disputes and international cooperation that are central to the identity of the United Nations, in the spirit of solidarity that permeates the work of the Socialist International. We wish him every success in his new role.

Africa

Socialist International focuses on Africa at meeting in Accra, Ghana

7-8 October 2016



H.E. President Mahama with participants at the meeting of the SI Africa Committee in Accra, Ghana

Under the main theme of: “**Advancing our social democratic vision in Africa**”, the Socialist International held a meeting of its Africa Committee in Accra on 7-8 October 2016, hosted by the National Democratic Congress, NDC, the SI member in Ghana.

Bringing together member parties from all parts of the continent, the meeting took place at the Kofi Annan International Peace-keeping Centre in Accra, a symbolism that was not lost on participants, particularly at a moment when António Guterres, a former President of the Socialist International, was announced as nominated by the UN Security Council for the position of Secretary-General of the United Nations.



At the inaugural session of the meeting, a warm welcome was extended to all participants by Hon. Kofi Attor, Director of International Relations of the NDC. Following an opening speech by the SI Secretary General, Luis Ayala, the gathering heard from SI Vice-President Pendukeni Iivula-Ithana, Home Minister of Namibia, the Committee Chair, Emmanuel Golou of the PSD Benin, and SI President, George Papandreou. H.E. Kwesi Amissah-Arthur, Vice-President of the Republic of Ghana, made a special address to all participants.

In the working sessions which followed, Committee members held broad discussions on two main themes. On the first theme **“Advancing our social democratic vision in Africa: securing jobs, guaranteeing accessible quality education, developing health systems and ensuring social protection for all”**, there were in depth contributions on its various dimensions from the different national perspectives represented at the meeting and there was agreement on a number of points based on the ethos of democracy, good governance and the associated social responsibilities that make up the cornerstone of our identity as socialists and social democrats. Some of the elements of the discussion are reflected in the Declaration of Accra adopted at the conclusion of the meeting.

Under the second main theme of **“Peace and Security – working together building common strategies to face current challenges in the continent”** participants addressed existing conflicts affecting the region, along with their human, political and societal consequences, and the scourge of terrorism which presents a threat to the population and the democratic gains made in a number of countries. The commitment of social democracy to remove the causes of conflict by securing rights and freedoms for all citizens throughout the region and the determination of our movement to see an end to terror were underlined in the discussions. Considered of key importance were the sharing of intelligence and special training for the security forces to deal with the new threats that have to be faced by the countries in the region. Solidarity and mutual support, which are the trademark of our movement, was seen as strategic in securing peace.

During the course of the working sessions, participants from Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Chad, DR Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Mali, Morocco, Namibia, Niger, Senegal, Somaliland, South Africa, Togo and Western Sahara had the opportunity to share information on the national situation prevailing in their respective countries, on the challenges they faced and on the work and objectives of their parties.

In a special closing ceremony, the meeting was addressed by the President of the Republic of Ghana, His Excellency John Dramani Mahama, who highlighted the key social democratic objectives at the heart of the NDC campaign for the forthcoming general elections due in December 2016. Investment in people, jobs, education, healthcare, and in the infrastructure of the country to create opportunities and a better life for all Ghanaians, were central to their programme. He thanked the Socialist International for its presence in Ghana and for its solidarity.

All participants were unanimous in expressing their deep appreciation to the NDC for their hospitality in hosting this meeting and their optimism that the party would do well in the forthcoming presidential and parliamentary elections.

ACCRA DECLARATION

The Socialist International Africa Committee met in Accra, Ghana on 7-8 October 2016 under the main theme **“Advancing our social democratic vision in Africa: securing jobs, guaranteeing accessible quality education, developing health systems and ensuring social protection for all”**.

The following accords were reached:

- A. On the main theme: “Advancing our social democratic vision in Africa: securing jobs, guaranteeing accessible quality education, developing health systems and ensuring social protection for all”:
 1. That SI member parties in government must strive to reach out to their colleagues who find themselves in opposition and to engage in dialogue more often on strategies that could help them get their voices heard on issues of good governance, rule of law, social protection and a sense of belonging.
 2. That youth unemployment is a huge time-bomb that could threaten peace and security in every country. Hence collective efforts should be made to offer the right kind of education and training for the youth to qualify them for employment.
 3. That matters such as social housing, national health insurance, job security, social interventions for the vulnerable (such as the LEAP programme in Ghana and South Africa) should be pursued to bring down tensions that may lead to social anarchy.
 4. That access to quality education both in terms of infrastructure and an appropriate curriculum should be increased as part of the social democratic agenda to face current challenges on the continent.
- B. On the second theme: “Peace and Security – working together building common strategies to face current challenges in the continent” the meeting agreed:
 1. That African countries need to come up with stronger and better trained armies that can secure their citizens, to ward off conflicts and armed insurgencies by terrorist groups. Where armed conflicts have been resolved, every effort should be made to forgive and reconcile all factions that took part in past conflicts. The South African Truth and Reconciliation as well as the Namibian reconciliation strategies were cited.
 2. That the UN Secretary-General and his special envoy should continue their efforts aimed at achieving a mutually acceptable solution which provides self-determination for the Saharawi people. In this regard the SI should request the Kingdom of Morocco and the Polisario Front to engage in direct and serious negotiations under the auspices of the UN.
 3. That the threat of terrorism in Africa, be it ISIS or Boko Haram, in Nigeria, Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire and elsewhere, needed to be confronted by pooling and sharing collective intelligence and it was necessary to be each other’s keeper, since the effects of an attack on one country has repercussions throughout the continent.
 4. That SI members should step up their solidarity and cooperation with those facing security threats and terrorism.
 5. To denounce the conduct of the government of Gambia, including the holding of political prisoners, among them the leader, Ousainou Darboe, and members of the executive of the SI member party, the UDP; the constant violations of human rights, arbitrary detentions and

extrajudicial killings, and to demand the immediate release of all those imprisoned for political reasons and the holding of free and fair elections.

In conclusion, Socialist International will continue to work together to contribute to the resolution of conflicts and the current challenges to peace and security confronting the continent. The NDC of Ghana, the host party, was accorded warm appreciation for hosting this meeting of the Africa Committee in Accra. Members expressed optimism that the NDC would win the upcoming December 2016 general elections and will continue in office to serve the people of Ghana, Africa, and to continue its active role in the Socialist International.

Syria

Socialist International calls for an immediate end to the ongoing bloodbath in Syria and for united efforts by the international community to end the conflict

14 October 2016

As the world continues to witness the tragedy taking place in Syria, the Socialist International calls for renewed concerted efforts by the international community to stop the carnage and human suffering which has intensified following the breakdown last month of the brief ceasefire that lasted less than a week.

The Syrian people are hostages to a conflict that transcends their country and whose solution today lies primarily outside their borders. According to United Nations figures, some 13.5 million Syrians are today requiring humanitarian assistance. Of these, more than half are internally displaced and close to five million are refugees. In the past week alone we have seen the latest horrors that people in Aleppo, including women and children, have suffered as a result of multiple bunker-buster and incendiary bombs on residential areas and medical facilities.

The world urgently needs a solution to this war, both to save the Syrian people who are suffering unjustly, and to counter the increasingly divisive and challenging times we live in today, which requires more determined multilateral action to halt and prevent the threats of further and potentially more dangerous conflicts.

The bombing in Syria must stop, humanitarian assistance must be urgently provided, and the war must be brought to an end. The announcement of talks in Lausanne to be held tomorrow is an encouraging development which the Socialist International welcomes. It is vitally important that those engaged in this dialogue ensure that these talks are carried out in an environment of constructiveness and a genuine will to bring a swift end to the conflict.

October 24 is United Nations Day, being the day on which the UN was founded in 1948, and this year it should mark the beginning of the end of the conflict in Syria.

Venezuela

SI Declaration on Venezuela

21 October 2016

The Socialist International deplores the decision adopted yesterday, Thursday 20 October, by the Electoral National Council (CNE) of Venezuela to postpone until a new judicial order the process of collection of 20% of signatures required to activate a recall referendum on the government of Nicolás Maduro scheduled for 26, 27 and 28 of this month. In its public declaration, the CNE bases its decision on compliance with the Constitution and observance of precautionary measures adopted by the criminal courts of Valencia, San Fernando Apure, Aragua and Bolivar, after accepting complaints for alleged electoral crimes against the

political forces which are members of the Mesa de Unidad Democrática (MUD), an alliance which includes member parties of the SI, in the process to activate the recall referendum.

The Socialist International strongly rejects this new delaying tactic by the Venezuelan electoral authority and calls on the CNE to assume its high responsibilities in the recall referendum and not to obstruct the process. At the same time, in the context of these electoral accusations, the SI condemns the issuing of restriction orders by the criminal courts of Valencia, the capital of the state of Carabobo, against eight political leaders who are members of the MUD, among them the ex-presidential candidate Henrique Capriles, preventing them from leaving the territory, and demands the annulment of this procedurally incorrect and arbitrary measure.

Finally, the Socialist International reiterates its determination to defend democracy and human rights in Venezuela and renews its call on the government to stop the daily misuse and undermining of the State institutions, and to stop acting against their nature and proper functioning.

IPU

SI meeting at the 135th IPU Assembly in Geneva

24 October 2016



The Socialist International meeting at the 135th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in Geneva, Switzerland, was held on Monday 24 October 2016. The meeting was chaired by the SI Secretary General and included the participation of parliamentarians from SI parties in Angola, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Dominican Republic, Finland, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, Hungary, Iraq, Italy, Lesotho, Mali, Mongolia, Nicaragua, Niger,

Palestine, Portugal, South Africa, Turkey, Venezuela, and as a guest, from Djibouti.

In the discussions, participants exchanged views on the emergency items on the agenda of the IPU that had been presented for adoption by the Assembly, drawing attention to the situations of Palestine, Venezuela and Syria. The Palestinian delegation recalled that the proposed emergency item on Palestine at the previous meeting had been postponed to this Assembly and underlined their continued need for international support and recognition. The head of the Venezuelan delegation described the crisis they were living with the continuing erosion of democracy, which had led them to present a proposal on Venezuela as an emergency item, and the meeting was informed of the dramatic developments that had taken place the day before when the parliament had been violently invaded. The situation of Syria was highlighted by many as an urgent international matter. Participants observed that it was helpful to have this opportunity to listen to their comrades, to share opinions and to express their solidarity.

The meeting heard a report on the latest developments in the fight to liberate Iraqi territory captured by ISIS and exchanged perspectives on the regional implications.

In his summing up, the SI Secretary General recalled the need to act as socialists. We are living in a world where there are very few rules and there is a multiplication of conflicts that cannot be contained within borders. We had the challenge of securing democracy with respect for freedoms and rights, without which there could be no peace. There was a need to strengthen multilateralism to counter the rise in populism and nationalism we are seeing today. It was therefore an obligation of us all to react to Syria, to respond to the call from Venezuela and to stand with the Palestinian people in their quest for the recognition of Palestine as a sovereign state.

Turkey

SI calls for respect for democracy in Turkey and the release of detained HDP leaders

4 November 2016

The Socialist International firmly deplores the arrest this morning of Selahattin Demirtaş and Figen Yüksekdağ, Co-Chairs of the People's Democratic Party (Halkların Demokratik Partisi), HDP, a member party of the SI, and the detention of 11 other HDP members of parliament, in a further blow to Turkish democracy following earlier crackdowns and restrictions on the freedoms and rights of the citizens of that country.

The HDP is the third largest political party in Turkey and won seats in parliament in June 2015 despite the existing 10% threshold, and again in the elections re-called in November 2015. In May this year, the immunity that MPs usually hold from prosecution was removed from HDP members. Party members have subsequently protested against repeated raids of their homes and offices, travel bans and arbitrary arrests, particularly since the failed coup of last July.

The Socialist International, which includes the Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi), CHP, the leading opposition party in Turkey as a full member, and the HDP, as a consultative member, has been closely following with concern developments in Turkey since the attempted coup last July, which both parties took a clear stand against. Within the context of the state of emergency declared in July, and which has since been extended to January 2017, a reported number of more than 110,000 officials have been detained or suspended, more than 130 journalists have been taken in to custody, several hundred have had their press cards confiscated and over 150 media outlets have been closed down. In recent days the authorities stormed the offices of the Cumhuriyet newspaper, arresting 15 members of staff including its editor-in-chief.

Opposition political representatives and freedom of expression in Turkey are victims of a lack of proper implementation or denial of the presumption of innocence in the case of those accused and detained, of the absence of the due process of law and of the necessary transparency and the guarantees required when enforcing the state of emergency. It is therefore of crucial importance that any curtailment of rights, restrictions on freedom of expression, imprisonment or detentions, be clearly justified in accordance with the law, if Turkey is to remain a democracy.

The government of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan urgently needs to change its course to strengthen and defend the rules and principles of democracy, and not to weaken them by side-stepping or denying them. The struggle against terror in Turkey and its criminal targeting of innocent people, which we strongly condemn, will be reinforced by a judiciary and a justice system that protects and defends all of the rights and all of the freedoms of all of the citizens of Turkey.

Morocco

The SI at the COP22 in Marrakech

14-16 November 2016



The Socialist International was present at the 22nd Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, COP22, held in Marrakech, Morocco, between 7 and 18 November.

Around 200 countries and almost 500 heads of state and government and ministers attended this year's COP22. The main focus was to secure and finalise the details of the Paris Agreement, the framework to strengthen international cooperation to combat and mitigate the effects of climate change and to ensure the global temperature stays below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, which was established at the previous COP21 held in Paris last December.

117 countries, accounting for more than 75 per cent of global greenhouse-gas emissions, have now ratified the Paris Agreement, which entered in to force on 4 November.

Discussions at the COP22 were productive and serious pledges were made. Among a number of proposals considered, the start date for the Paris Agreement was brought forward from 2020 to 2018; the Global



Parallel Event with SIW, COP22, Marrakech, Morocco, 14 November 2016, SI Secretary General Luis Ayala (left), Ouafa Hajji, President of Socialist International Women, SIW, (centre left), SI Vice-President, Chantal Kambiwa (centre right), Nestor Batio Bassiere, Environment Minister, Burkina Faso (right)

Environment Facility launched the Capacity-building Initiative for Transparency, backed by US\$50 million of funding from 11 developed countries; countries collectively pledged more than \$81 million to the Adaptation Fund; developed countries reiterated the goal to reach \$100 billion per year by 2020; and 47 countries from the Climate Vulnerable Forum committed to achieving 100 per cent renewable energy by 2050. At the close of the COP22, 190 governments approved the Marrakech Action Proclamation, calling for the highest political commitment, and strong solidarity with countries vulnerable to the effects of climate change. These commitments are reassuring but the pledges need to be realised, and the goals met. The Socialist International will continue to monitor the process and push for strong collective action from the international community to ensure the future can be safeguarded as much as possible from the effects of climate change across the globe.

San Marino

Elections in San Marino

16 November 2016



SI Secretary General, Luis Ayala, with members of the Party of Socialists and Democrats, PSD, of San Marino

Gambia

SI congratulates President-elect of Gambia, Adama Barrow

2 December 2016

The Socialist International warmly congratulates President-elect Adama Barrow on his decisive victory in the elections of 1 December 2016, finally bringing to an end the dictatorial reign of Yahya Jammeh who originally seized power in a coup in 1994.

Adama Barrow, of the SI member party the United Democratic Party (UDP), was the presidential candidate of an alliance of opposition parties.

This victory for the democratic opposition heralds a new era for democracy and offers hope to the people of Gambia who have for decades suffered the consequences of an authoritarian regime that has deprived them of their rights and freedoms, committed human rights violations, physical abuse and murder of political detainees in custody, denied them freedom of expression, and repressed and harassed members of the opposition.

The Socialist International had repeatedly denounced the actions of the Jammeh regime and called for the liberation of all political prisoners, including UDP leader Ousainou Darboe who was incarcerated last April.

Today we celebrate with the people of Gambia and reaffirm our solidarity with the UDP and all the democratic forces in the country who have waited so long for this day.

Gambia

Free by the will of his people

5 December 2016



The Socialist International welcomes the release today of Ousainou Darboe, imprisoned leader of the SI member party, the United Democratic Party, UDP, arrested in April 2016 and sentenced to three years' imprisonment, along with 18 party members and sympathisers, who were jailed following a peaceful protest in Gambia's capital.

Our International, which called persistently for these prisoners' release and repeatedly condemned the repression of the opposition by Gambia's dictator Yahya Jammeh, once again pays tribute to the courageous, civic and committed adherence of the people of Gambia to the principles and values of democracy, whose victory in the elections of 1 December, has brought about the release of these political prisoners and is an example of what will continue to be achieved.

This is a victory for Gambia, for its people and for all those mobilised in support of the struggle for democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in that country and elsewhere. It is also a concrete result of the victory of president-elect Adama Barrow and a sign of the new times that have arrived for Gambia.

The Socialist International will continue with its active campaign to free political prisoners from other jails across the world, wherever those who stand up for rights and freedoms for their peoples are incarcerated.

Ghana

Elections in Ghana

7 December 2016

SI Secretary General Luis Ayala with Kofi Portuphy, Chairman of the SI member National Democratic Congress, NDC, at the party headquarters in Accra on voting day in the presidential and parliamentary elections in Ghana



Johnson Kwadwo Nketia, Secretary General of the NDC, with SI Secretary General Luis Ayala



Iran

Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan, DPIK, at the SI office in London

12 December 2016



*Representatives of the Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan, DPIK, with SI Secretary General, at the SI office in London
12 December 2016*

Mediterranean

Meeting of the SI Mediterranean Committee Málaga, Spain

16-17 December 2016



The Socialist International Mediterranean Committee held a meeting in Malaga on 16-17 December 2016, hosted by the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE), focussing its discussions on “The current challenges to ensuring democracy, freedoms, rights, and peace in the Mediterranean” and “Strategies for reaffirming our vision and values in the Mediterranean

region”. Participants in the debates included delegates from Algeria, Cyprus, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, Montenegro, Palestine, Spain, Tunisia, Turkey, Western Sahara and Syria, who contributed different perspectives on these themes, reflecting the diversity and complexity of the region while at the same time the values and principles that unite us in the Socialist International.

In the opening session of the meeting participants were addressed by Mario Jiménez, Spokesperson of the governing commission of the PSOE and responsible for organisation, who extended a warm welcome to all participants; by the SI Secretary General Luis Ayala, and by Ricardo Cortés, member of the governing commission of the PSOE responsible for Foreign Affairs, who chaired the meeting.

Introductory speeches to the main themes were given by Mustapha Ben Jaafar from Ettakatol, Tunisia, an Honorary President of the SI, and by SI Vice-Presidents Ahmed Ould Daddah from the RFD Mauritania and Umut Oran of the CHP, Turkey.

A high priority in the discussions was given to developments in Syria, to the dire situation of the people of Aleppo, and the international community's failure to prevent or mitigate the humanitarian disaster that continues to unfold. It was highlighted that while almost 5 million Syrian refugees had sought shelter in neighbouring countries, most of the European countries had failed to fulfil their commitments, quite apart from their moral and legal obligations. It was also observed that the strictness with which the austerity measures were applied by the EU, which did so much damage to the region as a whole, was not matched by the same strictness in regard to the agreed quotas for migrants, noting at the same time that there was an evident need for the European Union to return to its founding values.

Six years on from the so-called Arab Spring, major setbacks in democracy and fundamental rights were observed in the countries affected, although Tunisia still offered a promising example.

The recent increase in terrorist attacks was a cause of grave concern, which all participants resoundingly condemned, and the need to tackle the causes of radicalism was underlined. Concern was also expressed over the loss of basic human rights resulting from security measures taken in a number of countries to counter terrorism.

Various conflicts affecting the region, both old and new, were discussed with parties directly concerned. In this regard, the Committee agreed on a series of proposals to achieve a fair *Mediterranean Pax*, which are outlined in the declaration subsequently adopted by the meeting.

Cause for optimism was seen in the situation of Cyprus where negotiations due to continue in January looked hopeful for providing a bi-zonal solution to that long-standing conflict and the committee was unanimous in its support for the process underway, which if successful would bring hope to others in the region as a good example of political coexistence in peace.

The agenda also included a discussion on the national situation in the different countries of the region, which offered the opportunity for participants to share information on the current realities in their respective countries, on work of their party, and the challenges ahead.

The Committee then adopted the Declaration: "A call for hope against resignation: For greater solidarity with refugees, towards the 'Mediterranean Pax' ", reflecting the key points of the discussion.

Following these debates, Ricardo Cortés inaugurated a special closing session in which the Committee was joined by Susana Díaz, President of the government of Andalucía and Secretary General of the PSOE-Andalucía. In her address, Susana Díaz pointed to the rich diversity of the peoples and countries that made up the Mediterranean basin and underlined the need for consolidating democracy, improving the economy and for the EU to coordinate a plan for migrants and refugees, particularly minors arriving without supervision. She stressed that we are not just socialists but also internationalists, and our strength lies in our values and ideas.

The SI Secretary General, Luis Ayala, touched on the key elements that dominated the discussions of the Committee and highlighted the crucial issues of Peace, Equality and Solidarity, which would form the basis of our discussions at the forthcoming SI Congress to be held in Cartagena, Colombia, in March 2017. He also looked forward to the taking office of the new Secretary General of the United Nations, António Guterres, a person we all identified with as socialists and who would have all our support in the complex work ahead of him.

MALAGA DECLARATION
A call for hope against resignation:
For greater solidarity with refugees, towards the 'Mediterranean Pax'

Original: Spanish

Democratic socialist parties from the Mediterranean region gathered for a meeting of the Socialist International Mediterranean Committee in the city of Malaga on 16th and 17th December 2016, with the goal of discussing and seeking solutions to the current challenges in the Mediterranean, eventually aiming to ensure the attainment of democracy, freedoms, human rights and peace in the region.

This meeting is taking place at a critical time for countries on both shores, stressed by several crises that question our stability and future. This Committee is not only very concerned about the evolution of the various conflicts affecting our area, but also remains distressed by the European Union's self-absorption in recent months.

For this committee it has become self-evident that we can only address the problems in the Mediterranean by considering it as one single entity. We are completely interdependent, and firmly believe that peace, prosperity, democracy and equality will not be accomplished, without tackling problems together and from a shared vision.

The war in Syria shames us all. We recall with dismay that it is estimated that around 400,000 people have died in 6 years, that 6.6 million Syrians are internally displaced and almost 5 million have sought shelter in neighbouring countries such as Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Turkey and Egypt. In contrast, most countries in Europe have not even hosted the refugees that reached their shores after dangerous journeys aspiring to a safer and better life, failing to fulfil their own commitments, as well as their moral and legal obligations. For this reason we appreciate the efforts of those few European countries, like Italy and Greece, which have opened their doors to them.

On the other hand, five years after the so-called Arab Spring, it is obvious that those democratising processes that inspired the region with hope have not evolved as we would have wished. Far from it, we have noted with great concern major setbacks in human rights, civil liberties and the rule of law in several countries, not only on the southern coast of the Mediterranean, as is the case in Egypt, but also in countries such as Turkey.

Moreover, we are horrified by all the terrorist attacks that have taken place in the last years throughout the Mediterranean, from Istanbul to Paris, from Brussels and Cairo to Tunis. We express our outrage and condemn the recent terrorist strikes by PKK that hit Turkey in the last weeks, where dozens of innocent people have lost their lives. Our governments should confront these threats from a global perspective, not only fighting terrorists on the ground but also tackling the causes of radicalism.

We are aware how old problems in the region remain entrenched, as is the case of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict or the Western Sahara issue, although we await with hope that the negotiations on Cyprus will soon be concluded with success. We express solidarity with the member parties of the Socialist International in government in the Mediterranean countries of the South Eastern Europe, and welcome the new government in Montenegro.

In this context, the member parties of the Mediterranean Committee of the Socialist International propose the following conclusions and measures to advance the pacification of conflicts in the region and achieve a fair *Mediterranean Pax*, based on the principles of equality, justice and democracy:

1. We ask the international community to stop the war in Syria and bring peace and stability to the country, thus allowing the refugees to return to their homes and begin the reconstruction of their homeland.
2. We call for greater solidarity among the countries of the European Union to welcome the number of refugees previously agreed. Not only is it a commitment undertaken, it is also a moral

obligation, in line with the founding values of the EU, as well as a legal imperative, in accordance with the Conventions on Human Rights.

3. We condemn all terrorist attacks and show our deep support to all their victims. We call on all governments in the region for greater cooperation, to join forces and share resources and intelligence to fight the scourge of terrorism. In addition, we appreciate all those forces fighting terrorism on the ground.
4. We are extremely concerned about the rise of populist and extreme right parties that inflame our societies with hate speeches and xenophobia. Social democratic forces around the world should unite to stop the emergence of these new actors, combating their simplistic responses to complex problems, as well as their intolerance, with a renewed discourse capable of putting forward an alternative to austerity policies that foster inequality and discontent in our societies.
5. We condemn the attempted military coup in Turkey on July 15th, but also deeply regret the authoritarian and undemocratic shift of the Turkish Government since then. We express our strong support and solidarity to all the Turkish people, their civil society, their journalists and human rights defenders, and also to our colleagues in the CHP and the HDP, who are being repressed for defending democratic values and ideas.
6. We welcome the French initiative to restore the peace process in the Middle East and we urge a return to the negotiating table, with full respect for International Law and United Nations resolutions, in order to achieve a just and lasting peace, based on the two-state solution, with the recognition of the State of Palestine on the basis of the 1967 borders, and ensuring that the State of Israel can live in peace and security.
7. We call on Morocco and the Polisario Front to resume the process of dialogue on the question of Western Sahara in a constructive spirit under the auspices of the United Nations and the African Union, and we ask the UN Secretary-General for his personal involvement. We will continue to support a just and lasting political solution accepted by both sides that can bring stability and development to Western Sahara and the region as a whole.
8. In the framework of the current negotiations between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders, who will meet in Geneva on the 9th of January 2017, we call on both sides of the island and all related parties to continue working to reach a bizonal, bicomunal federal solution for Cyprus as soon as possible. We cannot miss this important opportunity, we wish success to the International Conference on Cyprus that will take place on 12th January and we hope that the island of Cyprus will soon become an example of peaceful coexistence, cooperation and prosperity in the Eastern Mediterranean.
9. We closely follow the consolidation of democratic processes in Tunisia, and we call on the international community to help this country to tackle the economic and social crisis which threatens the only successful example of the Arab Spring.
10. We request the international community to deploy all its efforts to foster the internal dialogue in Libya in order to reach a political solution which would bring stability and security to the country and the whole region.
11. We congratulate António Guterres, former President of the Socialist International, on his appointment as the new Secretary-General of the United Nations, and wish him success in his efforts to advance the solution of the serious problems affecting our region.
12. We wish to emphasise the need to effectively support all sectors of the population that struggle, too often risking their lives, every day for more democracy, more freedom, more economic development and more equality between men and women. We want to keep alive the hopes and illusions of these groups, that are too often cornered by extremes.

Tackling all these challenges is our main task as Socialists and as members of this Committee. We must not give up. We must keep on fighting, day by day, shoulder to shoulder, so that this fragile, but at the same time unique area that is the Mediterranean, becomes more just, secure and prosperous for all.

Málaga, 17th December 2016

Iran

SI condemns terrorist attack against member party KDP-Iran

21 December 2016

The Socialist International firmly condemns the terrorist attack against the party headquarters in Arbil of the SI member Kurdistan Democratic Party, KDP-Iran, which took place on 20 December. The attack was carried out as party members were leaving a memorial ceremony honouring former party leader Abdulrahman Ghassemlou, who was assassinated in Vienna in 1989. Four party members, a member of the youth organisation and a security guard died in the attack and several others were seriously injured. Our International extends its deepest condolences to the families and comrades of those killed. The SI reiterates its strong solidarity with all members of the KDP-Iran at this difficult time.

Venezuela

SI welcomes the release of political prisoner Manuel Rosales

2 January 2017

The release from prison of Manuel Rosales, leader of Un Nuevo Tiempo, UNT, of Venezuela, an SI member party, has been warmly welcomed by the Socialist International. He was unjustly imprisoned following his arrest in October 2015, returning to the country after six years in exile.

While celebrating his release, we vigorously protest against the conditions imposed on his freedom, including the need for him to regularly report to authorities, and forbidding him from leaving the country. The International salutes his courage and strength, and expresses its support and solidarity to his family, friends, and comrades.

The SI reiterates its call for the immediate release of all political prisoners in Venezuela, including Leopoldo Lopez, leader of SI member party Voluntad Popular, VP, who has been incarcerated since 18 February 2014, and VP party members Daniel Ceballos and Yon Goicoechea, arrested on 18 March 2014 and 29 August 2016 respectively; and of Antonio Ledezma, Mayor of Caracas and leader of Alianza Bravo Pueblo, who was arrested on 19 February 2015; as well as the reported 100 more opposition activists arrested in 2014. We stand firmly in solidarity with them all.

D.R. Congo

A sign of hope for the DRC

5 January 2017

The new political agreement signed in Kinshasa by opposition leaders and the party of President Kabila at the end of 2016 is greatly welcomed by the Socialist International as a sign of hope and as a potential first step towards bringing reconciliation and peace to a country that has, for so long, been subject to internal divisions, political instability and conflict.

Following the expiry of President Kabila's term of office on 19 December 2016 and the absence of new elections, Congo saw a resumption of civil unrest and renewed violence on the streets. On 19 and 20 December alone, more than forty people were killed, shot by security forces.

This new agreement provides a framework for the organisation of presidential, legislative, national and provincial elections by December 2017, in which President Kabila will not then seek another term of office, and for an interim government of national unity with a Prime Minister to be named from among the opposition. There is also agreement on the creation of a transitional body for overseeing the accord, the Conseil National de Suivi de l'Accord (CNSAP), which will be headed by opposition leader Etienne Tshisekedi, president of the UDPS, an SI member party.

As negotiations proceed in regard to the details of the agreement, including the composition of the CNSAP and of the transitional government; on the practical arrangements and the political roadmap ahead, international support and encouragement for this process is crucial. A prompt implementation of the agreement is vital for its success and any attempt to thwart or delay any part of it must be avoided.

The international community must also be ready to assist as needed in the practical organisation of the elections to be held later this year. The Socialist International stands ready to support all efforts to this end, underlining at the same time that there can be no true democracy without freedoms and rights or where numerous political prisoners continue incarcerated and other citizens are forced to live in exile.

The Socialist International extends its recognition to all parties to this agreement, as well as to the mediators from Congo's Roman Catholic Church, the Conférence Episcopale Nationale du Congo (CENCO) who facilitated the dialogue, and calls on the remaining opposition parties who have thus far abstained, to join this national initiative in order to ensure a successful peaceful transition of power in the DRC, in what would be the first since its independence in 1960.

Portugal

SI present at the funeral of Mário Soares

10 January 2017



Venezuela

Venezuela at the centre of concerns of democrats the world over

14 January 2017

As 2017 begins, it is more evident than ever that the political, social and economic situation in Venezuela is becoming increasingly serious and urgent for millions of its inhabitants, and the international community cannot remain indifferent or absent in face of the critical circumstances of a nation which, thanks to the efforts of a whole generation some decades ago, was able to rise up and follow the path to democracy.

Along with with the highest international records for inflation in existence today in a national economy and the largest number of deaths caused by homicides and criminal acts, this situation multiplies the human suffering, the poverty and desperation of citizens who cannot rely on the protection of the institutions which do not respond to the many emergencies that afflict the Venezuelan people and which reflect the characteristics of a failed state.

In this context, the expectations generated last year by a dialogue initiated between the opposition forces and the government headed by President Maduro have not materialised in significant results, contributing to the dramatic situation in the country due to the government's non-compliance with the agreements reached between both parties, including the liberation of all political prisoners, the recognition of the sovereignty of the National Assembly, appropriate responses to the humanitarian crisis and the establishment of an electoral timetable. This has prevented the continuation of the process of dialogue.

Moreover, 2017 has begun with a lack of recognition by the Supreme Court of Justice, today in the hands of a pro-government majority, of the powers of the legislators in the National Assembly in regard to decisions recently adopted by this body, and the flagrant refusal to acknowledge the right of parliamentary immunity, as shown in the case of the arrest of the legislator Gilber Caro of Voluntad Popular, a member party of this International. We denounce both these actions, as they reveal a disregard of the fundamental rules of a democratic system.

Faced with this growing move towards authoritarianism that we see today in Venezuela, our International once again demands respect for the freedoms and rights of all Venezuelans, to whom we extend our deepest solidarity and support. We are convinced that the democratic spirit of the Venezuelan people will prevail and we will continue to stand by them from all the corners of the world.

The Gambia

Adama Barrow sworn in as President of The Gambia

19 January 2017

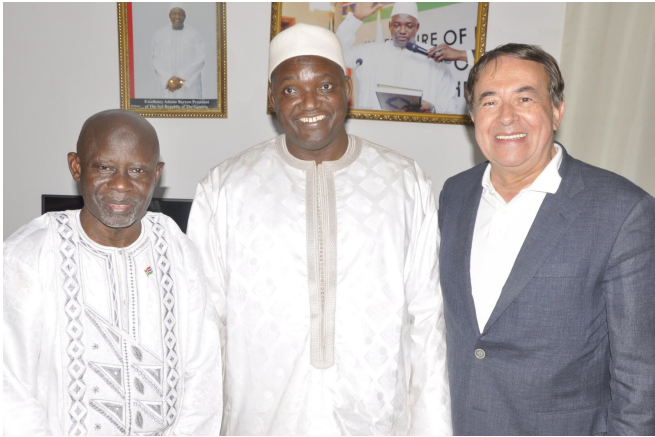


The Socialist International congratulates the new President of The Gambia, Adama Barrow, of the SI member party the United Democratic Party (UDP) and candidate of an alliance of opposition parties, who was sworn in today at the Gambian Embassy in Dakar, Senegal, as outgoing President Yahya Jammeh, who has been in power for 22 years following a military coup in 1994, refuses to step down.

The Gambia

Democracy restored in The Gambia

27 January 2017



Ousainou Darboe (left), Adama Barrow (centre) and SI Secretary General Luis Ayala (right)

political actors as a demonstration of solidarity and support of the Socialist International for the restoration of democracy in that country.

President Adama Barrow returned to The Gambia on Thursday 26 January to be greeted by multitudes of its citizens celebrating his homecoming, which heralded a new chapter in the political life of the nation.

On the day of his arrival, President Barrow held a fraternal meeting with the United Democratic Party, UDP, leader Ousainou Darboe, and the Secretary General of the Socialist International, Luis Ayala, at his home in the capital, Banjul. In the days preceding his return, Ayala had been in The Gambia meeting with the leadership of the SI member party, the UDP, with recently released political prisoners, and other



The leadership of the United Democratic Party, UDP, following a special meeting with the SI Secretary General, Luis Ayala, at their party headquarters in Banjul

Latin America and the Caribbean

Working meeting of members of the SI Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean

30 January 2017

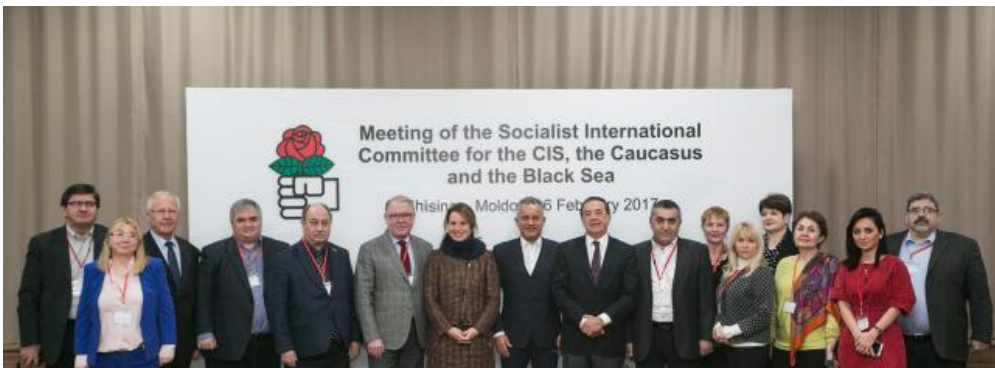


A working meeting of members of the SI Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean was held in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, on 30 January 2017. The discussions focused on the political context in the region at the time of the XXV SI Congress, issues relating to the region to be addressed by the Congress, contributions from parties in the region to the preparation of the general resolutions to be adopted by the Congress, a review of the elections to be held at the Congress in relation to candidates from the region and brief reports on national situations.

SI Committee for the CIS, Caucasus and Black Sea

Working meeting of members of the SI Committee for the CIS, Caucasus and Black Sea

6 February 2017



A working meeting of members of the SI Committee for the CIS, Caucasus and Black Sea was held in Chisinau, Moldova, on 6 February 2017, hosted by the Democratic Party of Moldova, DPM. The meeting was held to focus on the political context in the region in advance of the XXV SI Congress, and to hear the contributions from SI member parties to the resolutions to be adopted at the Congress. It also offered the opportunity for updates on the situation in countries in the region.

In Memoriam
In remembrance of friends and colleagues



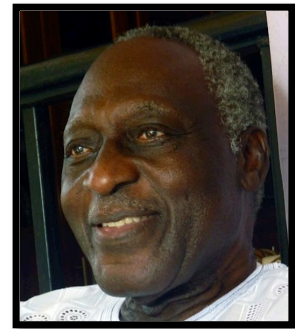
Armando Villanueva del Campo
1915-2013



Pierre Mauroy
1928 - 2013



Gyula Horn
1932-2013



Kofi
Awoonor
1935-
2013



Peter Schieder
1941-2013



Nelson Mandela
1918-2013



Shulamit Aloni
1928-2014



Barbara Prammer
1954-2014



Takako Doi
1928 - 2014



Gough Whitlam
1916 - 2014



László Kapolyi
1932 - 2014



**Vahan
Hovannesian**
1956 - 2014



José María "Txiki" Benegas
1948 - 2015



Hocine Ait Ahmed
1926 - 2015



**António de Almeida
Santos**
1926 - 2016



Boutros Boutros Ghali
1928 - 2016



Anker Jørgensen
1922 - 2016



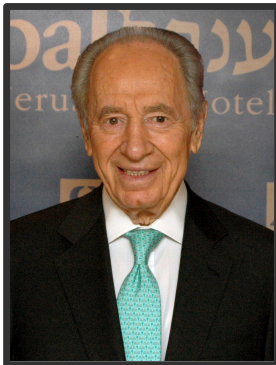
Bogdan Denitch
1929 - 2016



Mohamed Abdelaziz
1945 - 2016



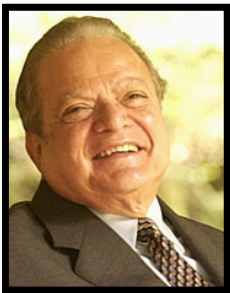
Michael Rocard
1930 - 2016



Shimon Peres
1923 - 2016



Charif Fayyad
1928 - 2016



Luis Alberto Monge Álvarez
1925 - 2016



Mário Soares
1928 - 2014



Etienne Tshisekedi
1932 - 2017

Activities between the XXIV and XXV Congresses

2012

September

Meeting of the SI Presidium and Heads of State and Government from SI member parties, at the United Nations in New York during the High Level segment of the General Assembly

October

Observer delegation to the Venezuelan elections

San Marino event

SI Meeting at the IPU Assembly in Quebec, Canada

Attendance at the ANC Solidarity Conference in Pretoria

November

Meeting at the PS in Lisbon

Meetings with Jalal Talabani and the PUK in Suleymania, Northern Iraq

Meetings in Athens, Greece

Attendance at SWAPO Congress

December

International policy conference in Santiago, Chile, addressed by the SI Secretary General

Attendance at the inauguration of Carolina Toha as Mayor of Santiago, Chile

Participation at the Forum du Progrès, Jean Jaurès Foundation and Lula Foundation in Paris

Attendance at the ANC Conference

2013

January

Finland meetings with SDP leadership

Participation in event to launch the candidates of the PSI, Italy

February

Meetings of the SI Ethics and Finance Committees and the SI Presidium

Meeting of the SI Council in Estoril, Portugal

Participation in conference of the SPA in Albania

March

Participation in Conference of UNT, Venezuela

Meeting of the SI Africa Committee in Niamey, Niger

SI meeting at the IPU Assembly in Quito, Ecuador

April

PRD meetings in the Dominican Republic

Participation in election campaign of the SPA, Albania

SI presence at the trial of CHP members of parliament

Meeting of the SI Kurdish Committee, of PUK officials, and Meeting with the President of Iraqi Kurdistan

SI delegation to observe the elections in Venezuela

Participation in the Congress of the PAICV in Cape Verde

May

Meetings at the United Nations in New York

Participation in the Congress of UNE, Guatemala

Meetings in Chile with member parties

Meeting with the chair of the Africa Committee in Paris

Preparatory talks in New York for an SI meeting at the United Nations

Participation in meeting of the SDP Finland in Turku

Participation in Conference of Municipalities in Istanbul, Turkey

June

Meeting of the SI Committee for the CIS, Caucasus and Black Sea in Georgia

Attendance at remembrance services and funeral of Pierre Mauroy in Paris

Meeting with the UN Secretariat in New York

Observation of the elections in Albania

Primary elections in Chile

July

Meetings in Chile with the Mayor of Santiago and member parties

Attendance at the funeral of Gyula Horn and meetings with the MSzP

Meeting of the SI Committee of Local Governments in Santiago, Chile

Meeting of the SI Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean in Kingston, Jamaica

August

SI delegation to observe the elections in Mali

Meetings in South Africa with the ANC and President Jacob Zuma

September

Participation in the international symposium for the PNP's 75th anniversary, Jamaica

Meeting of the SI Ethics Committee in London

Meeting of the SI Finance and Administration Committee in London

Attendance at the ceremonies for the new President of Mali in Bamako

Meeting of the SI Presidium and Heads of State and Government from SI member parties, at the United Nations in New York during the High Level segment of the General Assembly

October

Attendance at the World Conference of Mayors in Rabat, Morocco

SI meeting at the IPU Assembly in Geneva

Participation in the Congress of A Just Russia Party in Moscow

Meetings with the CHP leadership in Ankara

Meeting with a delegation of the Coalition of the Syrian Opposition, London

November

Meetings in Ghana with the NDC and President John Dramani Mahama

Meetings of the SI Ethics and Finance Committees and the SI Presidium

Meeting of the SI Council in Istanbul, Turkey

Visit to imprisoned CHP parliamentarians, Ankara

Attendance at the first round of the Presidential elections in Chile and related meetings

Meeting with Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama in Tirana

December

Meeting with Belgian Prime Minister Elio di Rupo in Brussels

Attendance at memorial service for Nelson Mandela and meeting with President Jacob Zuma

Attendance at anniversary event in honour of ex-President of Finland, Tarja Halonen

Attendance at second round of Presidential elections in Chile and related meetings

2014

January

Meetings with the MPLA leadership and with President Eduardo dos Santos

March

Visit to Moscow for meetings with Sergei Mironov and A Just Russia Party

Attendance at the inauguration of President Michelle Bachelet in Chile

SI Meeting at the IPU Assembly in Geneva, Switzerland

Meeting of the SI Africa Committee in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

April

Meeting in Mexico City with the leadership of the PRI, Mexico

Visit to Kiev for meetings with the SDPU and trade union leaders

Meeting in Mexico City with the leadership of the PRD Mexico

May

Meeting of the SI Migrations Committee in Tangiers, Morocco

Meeting of the SI Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean in the Dominican Republic

Participation at seminar held in the Brazilian Parliament in Sao Paulo, Brazil

June

Participation in the congress of the PS, Senegal in Dakar

Participation in Conference on Social Democracy, including the Prime Minister of Nepal, Aung San Suu Kyi and the chair of the SI Asia-Pacific Committee held in Kathmandu

Meetings of the SI Ethics and Finance Committees and the SI Presidium

Meeting of the SI Council in Mexico City

Participation in the Symi Symposium in Greece

Attendance at the congress of the PSOE, Spain

September

Meeting of the SI Committee for the CIS, Caucasus and Black Sea in Astana, Kazakhstan

Meeting of the SI Presidium and Heads of State and Government from SI member parties, at the United Nations in New York during the High Level segment of the General Assembly

October

Participation in the election campaign of the DPM, Republic of Moldova

SI meeting at the IPU Assembly in Geneva

Meetings in Washington and with the OAS

Meeting with the Secretaries-General of the Nordic parties in Oslo

November

Meeting in Madrid with the new authorities of the PSOE, Spain

Participation in the Conference on Socialism on the 125th anniversary of J. Nehru's birth

Meeting with the leadership of the Indian National Congress in New Delhi

Meeting of the SI Migrations Committee in Catania

Meeting of the SI Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean at the OAS in Washington

SI Mission to Venezuela

December

Meeting with President Mahmood Abbas and with Fatah and the PNI in Ramallah

Meetings in Israel with the Israel Labour Party and with Meretz

Meetings of the SI Ethics and Finance Committees and the SI Presidium

Meeting of the SI Council at the United Nations Office in Geneva

Participation in meeting of the SDPA in Baku, Azerbaijan

2015

January

Meetings in Athens ahead of general elections

Attendance at funeral of Satu Heinaluoma, Helsinki

February

Attendance at funeral ceremony of Brigit Stenarv in Stockholm

Meeting of the SI Mediterranean Committee in Valencia, Spain

Meetings at the United Nations in New York

March

Attendance at the inauguration of President Tabaré Vázquez of Uruguay

Meetings in Buenos Aires with member parties

Meetings in Santiago, Chile

Meetings in Istanbul and Ankara with the CHP and members of parliament

Observation of national elections in Israel and meetings with member parties

Attendance at 25th anniversary of Namibian independence and inauguration of President Hage Geingob

Participation in meeting of the Arab Social Democratic Forum in Tunisia

SI meeting at the IPU Assembly in Hanoi, Vietnam

April

Meeting of the SI Africa Committee in Bamako, Mali

Meetings with the UN Secretariat in New York in advance of SI Council meeting

Participation in the International Forum of A Just Russia Party in Moscow

May

SI Mission to Western Sahara

Preparations for the SI Council meeting at the UN in New York

Attendance at the congress of the FLN in Algeria

June

Extraordinary meeting of the SI Migrations Committee in Rabat, Morocco

Participation in the congress of the SDPM in Podgoriça, Montenegro

Attendance at the PS congress in Poitiers, France

Meeting of the SI Committee for the CIS, Caucasus and the Black Sea in Yerevan and meeting with Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan

Participation in the congress of the DPS in Podgoriça, Montenegro

Meeting with President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan in Baku

July

Meetings of the Ethics, Finance and Mediterranean committees in New York

Meeting of the SI Council at the United Nations in New York

Participation in the Symi Symposium in Corfu, Greece

August

Meetings in Santiago with Chilean authorities and party leaders

Meeting of the SI Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean in Cartagena, Colombia

September

Participation in Global Conference on Money in Politics held in Mexico City

Participation in joint PRD-PLD event in Dominican Republic

Visit to Angola for Council preparations

Attendance at the UK Labour Party Conference in Brighton

October

Meeting of the SI Ethics Committee in London

Meeting with the PS France in Paris

SI Meeting at the IPU Assembly in Geneva

Meeting of the SI Mediterranean Committee in Barcelona, Spain

November

Attendance at the PNDS Congress in Niamey, Niger

Meetings of the SI Ethics and Finance Committees and the SI Presidium

Meeting of the SI Council in Luanda, Angola

Participation in the COP21 Climate Summit in Paris, France

December

Observation of the legislative elections in Venezuela

SI Press conference at the COP21 climate summit in Paris

Attendance at the inauguration of President Alpha Condé in Guinea

Attendance at the inauguration of President Roch Marc Kaboré in Burkina Faso

2016

January

Attendance at the opening of the new parliament in Venezuela

Meetings in Santiago with Ricardo Lagos and Chilean parties

Meetings in Buenos Aires with the UCR leadership and President Mauricio Macri of Argentina

Attendance at the CHP congress and visit to prison where journalists are held

Attendance at the PS congress in Santiago, Chile

February

Meetings in Santo Domingo with the PRD and with the President of the Republic and participation in the ceremonial signing of the accord between the PRD and PLD

Meeting with Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama in Tirana

Meetings in Athens, Greece

Meeting in Minsk with the leadership of the Belarussian SDP

March

Participation in the congress of the Nepali Congress Party in Kathmandu

SI meeting at the IPU Assembly in Lusaka

Meeting with the Patriotic Front at their headquarters in Zambia

April

Meeting of the SI Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean in Dominican Republic

Participation in the PSI congress in Salerno, Italy

Participation in the congress of Just Russia party in Moscow, Russia

May

Meeting with the President of Azerbaijan in Baku

Meeting with the President of Armenia in Yerevan

Participation in the congress of the BSP in Bulgaria

Meeting with the PBSB in Bulgaria

SI delegation to observe the elections in the Dominican Republic

Meeting with SI Vice-President Elio di Rupo in Brussels

June

Meeting of the SI Commission on Inequality in Brussels

Meetings in Athens with PASOK and other parties in Greece

Attendance at the memorial anniversary of the passing of Andreas Papandreou

Meetings of the SI Ethics and Finance Committees and the SI Presidium

July

Meeting of the SI Council at the United Nations Office in Geneva

Meeting in Athens with Potami leader and attendance at the Symi Symposium in Kos

Meetings at the UN Secretariat in New York regarding forthcoming meetings

Attendance at the US Democratic Party Convention in Philadelphia

August

Meetings in Accra with the leadership of the NDC on forthcoming regional meeting

Attendance at the inauguration of the new government of the Dominican Republic

Participation in the MPLA party congress in Luanda

September

Meetings in Santiago, Chile

Meetings in Bogotá, Colombia with PL leaders and Minister of Interior

Participation in the International Conference on Electoral Systems in Moscow

Meeting of the SI Presidium and Heads of State and Government from SI member parties, at the United Nations in New York during the High Level segment of the General Assembly

Attendance at the signing of the Peace Accord in Colombia

Attendance at the funeral of Shimon Peres in Jerusalem

October

Meeting of the SI Africa Committee in Accra, Ghana

Participation in the RPM congress in Bamako, Mali

SI meeting at the IPU Assembly in Geneva

Participation in the PRD congress in Panama City

November

Participation in the COP22 in Marrakech, Morocco

Participation in the election campaign of the PSD in San Marino

Congress preparations in Colombia

Participation in the congress of Fatah in Ramallah, Palestine

December

Meetings in Athens, Greece

Meeting of the SI Mediterranean Committee in Málaga, Spain

Presence in Ghana for the presidential and legislative elections

Participation in the PDM congress in Chisinau, Moldova

2017

January

Attendance at funeral ceremony of Mário Soares

Meetings in Paris

Meetings in Banjul, Gambia, with the leadership of the UDP and with President Adama Barrow upon his return to the country

Working meeting of the SI Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

February

Participation at the congress of the SDP Finland in Lahti.

Working meeting of the SI Committee for the CIS, Caucasus and Black Sea in Chisinau, Moldova

Attendance at the inauguration ceremony of President Adama Barrow of Gambia
