



**SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING
Istanbul, Turkey, 11-12 November 2013**

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL

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I would like to convey my warm and fraternal thanks to our hosts here in Turkey, the Republican People's Party, CHP, and to the party's leader and our Vice President, Kemal Kiliçdaroğlu.

We are very pleased to be here in the city of Istanbul, a cradle of cultures, civilisations, and peoples throughout the ages, and a symbol today of the expectations and demands of committed citizens mobilised for their freedoms.

In the struggle for more democracy and for more rights in this part of the world, Istanbul is the proper place for us to take a stand on the side of those men and women of this region who seek change, who seek a better life.

We support all the efforts to deepen and strengthen democracy in this country by our members, who host us here today to discuss how we can together, as a political family, contribute to the end of conflict all across this region beyond the borders of Turkey.

The events that unfolded in Gezi Park in June this year engaged us all, and our International called on the government of Turkey to listen to the grievances of its protesting citizens and to stop the violence it was using against them. We called for national dialogue by the authorities of the state and political actors represented in the national parliament to find a peaceful, institutional and democratic answer to the developments taking place at that time. We reiterate our solidarity with our friends and comrades in Turkey.

The tragedy in Syria

The SI has been particularly vocal on Syria since the beginning of the crisis in March 2011, when anti-government protesters took to the streets to call for an end to President Bashir al-Assad's regime, and to open 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.

We released a statement condemning the deeply abhorrent and immoral use of chemical weapons in Syria on the 21 August this year, and called for a broad and decisive international initiative to bring 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, we said, 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, if countries act together through the United Nations. In our statement, we called for the UN to define an international response, to hold accountable those responsible. In advancing common positions on this critical issue we appealed 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.

This aim continues to be vital. This is the right time, the right moment, and the right place to send a message of hope, a message of solidarity to all the Syrian people. We are pleased to welcome here many different actors from this region, and from across the world, to convene together and to push ahead with crucial dialogue and discussion, in order to contribute politically to a democratic solution and an end to the conflict.

Restoring Egypt's democratic agenda

Events in Egypt have also been of deep concern to the International. On 4 July, we took a stand on the forceful removal from office of President Mohamed Morsi by the Egyptian military, one year after he swept to power with 13 million votes. President Morsi, the first freely-elected President of Egypt, failed to deliver on the democratic promises he was elected to fulfil, and shocked the Egyptian people and international community when he granted himself un-challengeable powers in December 2012 and then rushed through a referendum on the new constitution despite a lack of agreement among the political forces.

Nonetheless, we clearly stated that the military coup was out of step with democracy and called 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 SI reiterated its solidarity with all those in Egypt who share the ideals and principles of social democracy and who remained engaged in defending the democratic goals of the 2011 revolution.

The political situation has continued to deteriorate rapidly, further diminishing the prospects for national reconciliation and democracy. On the 31 July, the SI spoke out against the violent crackdown and extreme use of force by the army and police against demonstrators that resulted in scores of deaths and many more injuries. In a statement we emphasised that political persecution must stop, the right to peaceful demonstration must be respected, and restrictions that had been placed on opposition media outlets and on freedom of expression, must be immediately lifted.

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, we said, and would continue to be a priority. Nothing less than true democracy, the enjoyment of freedoms and rights for all, could ever be the way forward after the sacrifices of so many since 2011. The Socialist International has called on all 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.

RECENT ACTIVITIES OF THE INTERNATIONAL

I am pleased to report on the work and activities of the International since the Council last met in Cascais, Portugal, on 4-5 February, hosted by the SI member party in that country, the Portuguese Socialist Party. In Cascais, as well as establishing the working organs of the International for the inter-congress period, SI member parties and guests from around the world, including representation from the BRICS and from the United States, addressed the important issues of the 'World Economy: Our Vision for Growth, Jobs and Sustainable Development'. In the months following the Council, we have progressed with many of the resolutions and decisions taken there, starting with the emergency item on Mali.

SI Africa Committee

A meeting of the Socialist International Africa Committee was held in Niamey, Niger, on 17-18 March, hosted by the PNDS, to focus on the crisis in Mali and its implications for the region and the continent. The meeting opened with a large public session on 17 March with the presence of over two thousand people.



SI Africa Committee meeting, Niamey, Niger

Being the first meeting of the Committee since 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 2012 SI Congress in Cape Town 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.

The Committee discussed the factors that had led to the outbreak of the crisis in Mali in January 2012. It noted that strategic errors had been made in dealing with past revolts; a growing democratic deficit within the state structures had led to increased corruption due to the weakening of the democratic institutions; there was less accountability, fraudulent elections, a weakened opposition, and organised crime, among other causes.

Good governance as the only foundation for peace and stability was needed, the disarmament of rebel groups, and equal rights and freedoms for all ethnicities from all regions, irrespective of gender or religion, had to be ensured for the reconciliation process.

In Niamey, committee members held a meeting on the Committee's discussions with the President of the Republic of Niger, HE President Mahamadou Issoufou, at the Presidential Palace. The President spoke of the progress that had been made in terms of democracy, infrastructure,

accountability and the economy, highlighting that, in all these endeavours, no country could go it alone.

We took the opportunity at the Committee meeting to reiterate the support of the SI for its two member parties in Mali, ADEMA-PASJ and the RPM.

SI Delegation to Mali

Later, we were happy that successful, free and fair elections had taken place in Mali on 28 July. On the occasion of the second round, on 11 August, I went to Bamako with a delegation of the SI which included Emmanuel Golou, Chair of the SI Africa Committee, from PSD Benin; SI Vice-Presidents Ousmane Tanor Dieng from the PS Senegal and Chantal Kambiwa from the SDF Cameroon, and Nana Cheikhna, Vice-President of the RFD of neighbouring Mauritania.



SI Delegation to Mali

The SI delegation was pleased with the orderly and peaceful manner in which the elections were carried out and to transmit the sentiments of the entire Socialist International family in congratulating Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, leader of the RPM, and an active member of the Socialist International, on his very significant election victory. Further meetings in Bamako were also held with the interim president of ADEMA-PASJ, Ibrahim Ndiaye. The two SI member parties in Mali

have been fundamental pillars of the democratic development and democratic life of the country, and the SI delegation reiterated the solidarity of the Socialist International with the efforts of the Malian people, of former President Traoré, and of its member parties, in defending and upholding the democratic institutions of the country, its territorial integrity and the security of its citizens, having faced the grave challenge of armed rebel forces in the North and subsequent terrorist activity.

Parliamentary elections in Mali

Following this successful election process, we are very pleased to see that President Keita has moved swiftly to schedule parliamentary elections on 24 November and 15 December 2013, delivering on his promises and demonstrating the successful transition to democracy that has taken place in Mali.

The Challenges of Democracy

On 28 September 2013 Guinea held the first parliamentary elections in its new democratic era. 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, from our member party the Guinean People's Assembly, RPG, in December 2010.

Until then, the Republic of Guinea has not had the chance to build on the experience of a democratic parliamentary tradition, which has 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 awaited the results.

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.

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, of 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.

The SI remains committed and engaged in support of this new democratic Guinea and awaits the outcome of the recourse presented to the courts on the issues arising from those elections.

Repression in Equatorial Guinea

The SI is vigilant in monitoring the situation in Equatorial Guinea and in June we released a statement after a peaceful demonstration by the opposition Convergence for Social Democracy, CPDS, the SI member party in that country, was forcefully repressed and six members of the party's leadership detained for several hours by security forces.

We wholeheartedly condemned these acts and called on the Obiang regime to end the harassment of opposition forces and to respect the fundamental rights of the people of Equatorial Guinea. The Socialist International will continue to speak out loudly against the anti-democratic behaviour of the Obiang regime.

SI Committee on the Kurdish People

On Friday 12 April, we held the first meeting of the SI Committee on the Kurdish People, established by the Council following a decision by the Congress, hosted in Sulaimaniya by our member party, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, PUK.

The meeting brought together representatives from more than twenty Kurdish political parties and organisations from Iraq, Iran, Turkey and Syria, which participants present called a historic moment. Tribute was paid to HE Jalal Talabani, President of Iraq, PUK leader and an SI Vice-President, with whom I had discussed the holding of this meeting. Talabani's absence was strongly felt and during the meeting participants joined me in wishing President Talabani a speedy recovery.

The politics and agendas of the different Kurdish parties throughout the region are diverse but the cause is the same: rights, freedoms, democracy and solidarity. At the meeting, participants underlined the commitment of the SI to human rights for all, not just for some, further emphasising that the time was right for politics and dialogue, considering the wave of change underway in the Middle East. Kurds in Iraq have come a long way in gaining rights and freedoms for their people since the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003, but important issues remain. Intimidation by Baghdad over Kirkuk is unacceptable, Article 140 of the constitution needs to be implemented and democracy needs to be respected.



SI Committee on Kurdish People, Sulaimaniya

Mala Bakhtiar, Head of the Political Bureau of the PUK, referred to the role of the Socialist International as crucial in bringing a greater understanding of this issue to all corners of the world. In open and frank discussions, all the parties present took part in the debates, describing their respective positions and viewpoints. 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.

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. In the future, the SI looks forward to organising an international conference on the Kurdish people.



Meeting with HE Massoud Barzani, President of the Kurdistan Regional Government and leader of the KDP, Iran

In the days immediately prior to that meeting, I also held talks with the President of the Iraqi Kurdish Parliament, Arsalan Baiz; the Governor of Kirkuk, Najmadin Karim; and the General Secretary of the Ministry of Peshmerga and Spokesman for the General Command of the KRG, Jabar Yawar Manda. On the occasion of the visit to Northern Iraq, I 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.

SI Committee for the CIS, Caucasus and Black Sea

At the beginning of June we organised a meeting of the SI Committee for the CIS, Caucasus and Black Sea region in Tbilisi, Georgia, to discuss current priorities and challenges to social democracy in that 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.



SI Committee for the CIS, Caucasus and Black Sea

We were very pleased to hold this 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. Social democracy is present in all countries of this region, even where the most challenging situations exist, and we stressed that it was the way forward for people in their struggles for democratic governance, conflict resolution, and fair social and economic progress. There are many issues to solve in this region and our political family stands ready to meet those challenges together, based on truth, real democracy and solidarity.

Gia Jorjoliani, leader of the SDD, celebrating the 95th anniversary of the social democrats first taking office in Georgia, explained that 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.

The discussions of the committee we co-chaired by Vahan Hovhannesyan 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.

In the two decades since the fall of the Soviet Union, many countries have been unable to progress from 'irresponsible order and totalitarian societies', with their governments focusing on the free market as the solution to everything. The Committee agreed it was therefore necessary to break the domination of oligarchic regimes and to push forward social policies, healthcare, education for all, equal opportunities, 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.

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, had contributed to the 'isolation and atomisation' of society, to a lack of common purpose, and to a deepening of differences. The question at the meeting 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 has 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.

A declaration was adopted at the conclusion of the meeting, and the Committee agreed to pursue a number of future initiatives, including a visit to Belarus, a meeting in Ukraine, 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.

Solidarity with the PDM of Moldova

The International has closely followed political life in Moldova over recent years with a keen interest in seeing the country join Europe, develop a new legitimate institutional framework, and consolidate past gains borne of the will of the Moldovan citizens for a fair and democratic society.

In solidarity with our member in Moldova, the Democratic Party, PDM, we issued a statement in May due to an undemocratic legislation that had then been passed by the interim government. We are very pleased that situation was quickly overcome, and that today our party is part of the coalition government of Moldova.

SI Committee on Local Governments

On 19 and 20 July, in Santiago, Chile, we held the first meeting of the SI Committee on Local Governments, established by decision of the Cascais Council. 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.



SI Committee on Local Governments meeting in Santiago

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, 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 had to accept their responsibility to guarantee the rights aimed at democratising access to social services for the various groups in society. 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 participants 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.

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 for Mayor of Ekaterinburg, were elected as Vice-Chairs of the Committee. A declaration was adopted and an exchange of views took place 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; as well as advancing with the preparation of the IV World Conference of Mayors of the Socialist International scheduled for 2014.

The Committee also held a meeting with Michelle Bachelet, the candidate of the progressive forces for the Presidency of the Republic, who shared her views with the representatives of the Socialist International, commenting on some of the main objectives of her government programme.



Meeting with Michele Bachelet

Local governments and municipalities

On the theme of local governments and municipalities, I am pleased to report that on 28-30 May I participated on behalf of the Socialist International at a Conference on Municipalities in Istanbul, organised by the CHP.

Later, on 1-4 October, the SI was present at the World Summit of Local and Regional Leaders 4th UCLG Congress, held in Rabat, Morocco. Along with Carolina Tohá, Chair of the SI Committee on Local Government and Mayor of Santiago, and other mayors and local authorities, we held a special meeting with Fathallah Oualalou, Mayor of Rabat.



With Fathallah Oualalou (centre), Carolina Tohá (centre left) and other mayors and local authorities

Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean, SICLAC

We convened the Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean, SICLAC, in Ocho Rios, Jamaica, on 26-27 July, 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. In her opening address, 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.



SI Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean, Ocho Rios

Discussions centred on two 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'*. On the first, committee members underlined that the region in general had emerged better from the economic crisis which began in 2008 than

on previous occasions, as reflected by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) growth forecasts. Nevertheless, it was 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.

On the second main theme, we acknowledged that the region still suffered from serious levels of inequality, and participants argued that social democratic parties should vigorously press ahead with their efforts to combat poverty, and achieve greater inclusion. We 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 also pointed out 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 present and 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.

We further discussed new technologies as a useful tool for our parties to be more effective in listening to the citizens, bringing people closer to politics and strengthening its legitimacy, and 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 discussing the deficit of democracy in the region, a declaration was adopted on Haiti calling for a normalisation of the political process and the carrying out of elections before the end of this year.

One of the tasks of this meeting was to elect the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee. Members of the SI Presidium from the region that were present in Jamaica met prior to the opening of the

Committee, and 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, an 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.

Attack against Governor of Santa Fe, Argentina

We were very concerned to learn of the attack against Antonio Bonfatti, Governor of Santa Fe, Argentina, whose home was the target of 14 bullets on 11 October, which appeared to be a direct challenge by forces and elements associated with drug traffickers and criminal gangs. In a statement the SI reiterated its solidarity with Governor Bonfatti and the Socialist Party of Argentina, and fully shared the Governor's denouncement of this attack as "an aggression against democracy and its institutions".

6th annual meeting of the SI Presidium and Heads of State and Government in New York



SI Presidium, United Nations Headquarters, New York

In keeping with our tradition of meeting at the United Nations in New York in conjunction with the UN General Assembly, the SI held its 6th annual meeting of the SI Presidium and heads of state and government at the UN headquarters on 26 September. 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.

In the context of the focus of the meeting on the struggles to gain new democracies and the pursuit of peace and security, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, António Guterres, a specially invited guest, 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. He reported that over two million refugees had been individually registered outside of Syrian borders, with many more internally displaced. Neighbouring countries, in particular Lebanon, were suffering very damaging political, security and humanitarian consequences. 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, and expressed the hope that further progress could be made through the auspices of the United Nations.

The President of Mali, HE Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, who participated in the meeting, was warmly congratulated on his comprehensive triumph in the recently-held presidential elections in Mali. He 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.

During discussions on the theme of the social democratic commitment to end poverty and to equality, it was regretfully 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.

Espionage and Surveillance

Recent revelations regarding the interception of private electronic data by security agencies were also discussed at the Presidium meeting. 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 this Council in Istanbul, 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.

International norms and equality among states

The SI released a statement on the issue of surveillance in July. 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 demonstrated, 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.

The SI drew attention to the responsibility of all states and governments to act in accordance with the established international norms without any exception.

DPRK nuclear test

On 12 February, the SI released a statement to condemn unequivocally the nuclear test that North Korea had carried out, and the subsequent threats of further tests. The test came just two months after their launching of a long-range rocket, which raised once again serious questions about Pyongyang's intentions and further destabilised peace and security in the region and in the world. The SI welcomed the swift action taken by the UN at the time. We stressed that it was imperative that the North Korean regime understood the concerns of the entire international community, and we called for further action to be taken immediately. Beyond the security and political implications, the Socialist International also expressed its grave concern over the damage to the environment caused by such activity, and given the secrecy surrounding North Korea's nuclear programme, we did not accept Pyongyang's assertion that it "did not pose any negative impact on the surrounding ecological environment".

Meetings of SI parliamentarians

Our practice of holding meetings of parliamentarians from SI member party's attending the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) assemblies continues and we have held two meetings during this period. On the occasion of the 128th IPU Assembly held in Quito, Ecuador, from 22 to 27 March 2013, the Socialist International organised its regular meeting of parliamentarians, on 24 March. Present at the meeting were parliamentarians from 32 countries covering all continents.

We exchanged updates on matters raised at the previous meeting in Quebec, and then focused on issues on the global agenda of our International, such as the financial crisis, and the crisis in Mali. We



SI parliamentarians meeting at the 128th IPU Assembly in Quito

caucus had resumed functioning correctly, 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. 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.

We made valuable progress 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. 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. I reported on the positive exchange of correspondence with the Secretary General of the IPU, Anders Johnsson, and the very constructive personal talks held prior to the meeting with IPU President Abdelwahed Radi.

Our second meeting of parliamentarians from the SI political family this year was held on 8 October, in connection with the 129th IPU in Geneva, Switzerland. Parliamentarians from close to 30 countries attended the meeting from regions worldwide, joined by a representative from the Global Fund. During the discussions, participants focused on recent developments in Syria and the Middle East; the global economy and the impact of the recent developments in the US, as well as on a review of national situations that affected the countries of member parties.

On Syria, participants underlined that the continuous clashes and the displacement of people inside and outside Syria, as well as the fact that terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda were infiltrating the country, were aggravating the tense situation in the Middle East. It was stressed that the international community had to live up to its commitments. Further, while political discussion and action on the destruction of



SI parliamentarians meeting at the 129th IPU Assembly in Geneva

chemical weapons was necessary, the remaining crucial problems could not be put aside or forgotten. The regionalisation of the conflict had grave political, security and humanitarian consequences for neighbouring countries such as Lebanon and Jordan, which were hardly able to cope with the influx of refugees fleeing the repression of the Syrian regime. Humanitarian relief was more necessary than ever. There was broad agreement that a political, peaceful solution to the conflict had to be found. Imposed solutions would not be successful and a strategic global approach to the conflict had to be mapped out. The SI had an important contribution to make in this regard. It was hoped that Iran could play a different role in the search for a negotiated solution in Syria. What had started as part of the 'Arab Spring' and had been a struggle for democracy, freedoms and rights had, over time, turned into an armed conflict in some countries. As I have previously emphasised, the SI has been very vocal on this issue on the basis that nothing but democracy will do.

On the global economy, we underlined that in the long run, more social democratic policies will be needed to stimulate the economy and that it is particularly important to drive home the message, especially on the international level, that austerity measures are hindering growth and the creation of jobs. In this multipolar world, there are many different players with major influence, and these all have to be taken into account. The SI's position has been clearly expressed in favour of more investment in people and strategies for growth and the creation of jobs - these are our priorities. And in regard to developing economies, as we can see by looking at examples from our own family such as the situations in Niger and Zambia, in countries with democracy and good governance, the struggle against poverty and for growth has been more successful.

The representative from Haiti briefly presented the situation in his home country, where the repeated delays for parliamentary and senatorial elections were bringing the country to the brink of democratic illegitimacy. He asked for the support of the SI in their struggle to uphold their democratic rights and the holding of free and fair elections. On the question of a recent ruling by the Constitutional Court of the Dominican Republic regarding citizenship of Dominicans of Haitian descent, it was agreed that the parties concerned would meet to discuss this further.

Statutory Committees

The newly-established SI Ethics Committee and SI Finance and Administration Committee (SIFAC) held their first meetings, on the 9 and 11 of September respectively, at the offices of the International Maritime Organization in London.

As specified in the Statutes of the Socialist International and following our agreed reforms, the membership of both Committees reflected a fair geographical balance of SI member parties, and participants were present from Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Middle East. During the meetings, participants discussed the Committee's work for the coming period, outlining current aims and goals.



Ethics Committee meeting, London

At the Ethics Committee meeting, members considered pending and new applications for SI membership and procedures to follow. Gilles Mahieu, from the Socialist Party, PS Belgium, was elected as the Ethics Committee Chair.

The agenda of the SIFAC meeting included discussion on the finances of the Socialist International, the status of membership fee payments, and the accounts for the year ending 31 December 2012. Janos Veres, from the Hungarian Socialist Party, MSzP, Hungary, and Maurice Poler, from the Democratic Action Party, Venezuela, were elected as Co-Chairs of the Committee.



SIFAC Committee meeting, London

Elections

A number of countries have recently held elections that have been crucial to the advancement of democracy in those nations, and SI member parties have been at the forefront in many of these. The SI has been firmly at the side of member parties struggling for democracy, in calling for international support and solidarity at such significant times.

Among the international observers officially accredited for the presidential elections carried out in Venezuela on 14 April, were those from the Socialist International. The SI, which has member parties in Venezuela and whose activities also include the participation of other like-minded organisations in that country, spoke out concerning the numerous registered irregularities before the electoral process began, as well as the many electoral incidents, denunciations and violations reported during the course of the elections.



Parliamentary elections, Albania

I was happy to accompany our Vice-President Edi Rama of the SI member Albanian Socialist Party, who led a coalition of the Left, Renaissance, to a resounding victory in parliamentary elections in Albania on 23 June. Such a high number of votes for the coalition marked a victory for Albania, for its people, and for the entire social democratic movement.

Crucial presidential elections also took place in Mali, as I have already mentioned in this report, on 28 July, and on 11 August, which we attended along with President Keita's inauguration ceremony on 19 September.

Member Parties

Many member parties of our global political family have held congresses, significant meetings and events in the past months and I am pleased that the SI has been able to attend some of these.

During April, the SI was present in Turkey as an international observer alongside our member party, the CHP, in the pursuit of justice, at the Ergenekon trial of a group of parliamentarians, academics, intellectuals and journalists. Unfortunately members of the CHP, and other individuals, remain detained after a trial that was not carried out in an independent court under the rule of law, and the matter is now with the Supreme Court.



Press conference at the Ergenekon trial, Turkey



PNP's 75th anniversary, Jamaica

On behalf of the SI, I have participated in numerous events of our member parties, including the election campaign activities of the Socialist Party of Albania, party meetings with the PRD in the Dominican Republic, and the congress of the PAICV, Cape Verde in April; meetings with the SDP, in Turku, Finland, and the congress of the UNE, Guatemala in May; member party talks in Chile in July; meetings with the ANC, South Africa in August; the symposium for the PNP's 75th anniversary in Jamaica in September; and the congress of A Just Russia Party in October. Most recently, last week, I

visited Ghana for constructive talks with our member party, the NDC, and with the President HE John Dramani Mahama. I am also very pleased to have been able to contribute to a number of other member party conferences and congresses through video messages.

I have held many further meetings with member parties, friends and comrades worldwide. Most recently, I met with a broad delegation of the National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces at the SI Secretariat in London, on October 29. We discussed the grave situation in Syria and their participation at the Council meeting where we today gather in Istanbul.



Meeting with a delegation of the National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, SI Secretariat, London

Lost friends and comrades

With sadness and regret we have lost some dear friends and comrades of the International.

We grieved the loss of **Pierre Mauroy**, a much respected leader and former Prime Minister of France, who served in different responsibilities at the helm of the SI and as its president from 1992 – 1999, and passed away on 7 June. Mauroy, a genuine and true socialist, was actively committed to guiding the SI on its path to become a truly international organisation, and his stand, his beliefs, and his contribution to the SI will long be honoured and remembered by us all. I attended his remembrance service in Paris and his funeral in Lille.

Armando Villanueva del Campo, Peruvian politician, passed away on 14 April. An integral actor in APRA, he spent most of his life in the political struggle for a fair government for the people, enduring imprisonment and exile along the way. He played an important role in the activities of the Socialist International and his unwavering commitment to freedom and social justice, is a legacy that extends beyond borders.

On 19 June, we lost **Gyula Horn**, former SI Vice-President, former leader of the Hungarian Socialist Party, and Prime Minister of Hungary from 1994 to 1998. Horn's role in the downfall of the Berlin Wall and subsequent unification of Germany is now embedded in European history, and his tireless political activity for his country and with the SI is honoured today. I attended his funeral in Budapest.

We were deeply saddened at the recent death of **Kofi Awoonor**, who was tragically killed during the Westgate Mall terrorist attack carried out in Nairobi, Kenya, on 21 September. Awoonor was an integral political and literary figure for Ghana, and for Africa, and headed the NDC delegation to the XXIV SI Congress in Cape Town. He leaves an enduring legacy.

Most recently, we mourned the loss of **Peter Schieder**, our friend and comrade from the Social Democratic Party of Austria, SPÖ, who died on 11 October. Schieder attended many SI Councils and Congresses as a delegate of the SPÖ, contributing to its activities and discussions. A true social democrat, Schieder will be remembered as an important part of the history of the SPÖ.

2013 – SI activities from the Cascais Council to the Istanbul Council

February

- 3-5 Portugal: Presidium and Council meetings
22-23 Albania: SPA conference and meetings

March

- 11-13 Venezuela: Conference of UNT
17-18 Niger: SI Africa Committee
22-24 Ecuador: IPU Assembly and SI meeting of parliamentarians

April

- 2-4 Dominican Republic: Meetings with the PRD
6-7 Albania: Election campaign activities
8-9 Turkey: SI presence at trial of CHP MPs
9-13 Iraq: Meeting of SI Kurdish Committee, of PUK officials and Meeting with President of Iraqi Kurdistan
14-15 Venezuela: Elections observation
19-21 Cape Verde: Congress of the PAICV

May

- 8-10 New York: meetings at UN and with SI President
12-13 Guatemala: Congress of UNE
15-18 Chile: meetings with member parties
23-24 Preparatory talks in New York for SI meeting at the UN
25-26 Finland: SDP meeting in Turku
28-30 Turkey: Conference of Municipalities in Istanbul

June

- 3-5 Georgia: Meeting of SI Committee CIS, Caucasus, Black Sea + Congress of the SDD
11 Paris: Remembrance services for Pierre Mauroy
13 Lille: Funeral of Pierre Mauroy
14-17 New York- Meeting with UN SG's office and preparation of Sept meetings of SI
23-24 Albania: election observation
30 Chile: primary elections

July

- 1 - 5 Chile: Meetings with Mayor of Santiago, parties, and preparation of SI meeting in Chile
8 Hungary: Funeral of Gyula Horn and meetings with the MSzP
19-20 Chile: Meeting of SI Committee on Local Governments
25-27 Jamaica: Meeting of SI Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean

August

- 8-13 Mali: SI delegation to observe elections
28-30 South Africa: meetings with President Zuma and the ANC

September

- 2-4 Jamaica: symposium for PNP's 75th anniversary
9 London: SI Ethics Committee
11 London: SIFAC meeting
19 Mali: ceremonies of new President of Mali
26 New York: Presidium + Heads of State and Government at United Nations

October

- 4-5 Rabat: World Conference of Mayors hosted by Mayor of Rabat
8 Geneva: SI meeting at 169th IPU Assembly in Geneva
26 Moscow: Congress of A Just Russia Party
28 Ankara: Meeting with CHP leader re Council

November

- 4-5 Accra: Meeting with President of Ghana and the leadership of the NDC
10 Istanbul: SI Ethics Committee / SIFAC meeting / Presidium meeting
11-12 Istanbul: SI Council meeting