

Report of the Secretary General

INTRODUCTION

The World Council of the Socialist International that we are holding on 21-22 June at the United Nations in New York brings us together at the headquarters of an organisation that has much significance for our political family.

There is a parallel between the creation, the development and agenda of the United Nations and of the SI. Both are post-war organisations that have maintained a strong ethic since their establishment. Both are organisations with a global approach to their proposals and with an unwavering commitment to peace, human rights and the search for well-being and a better standard of living for peoples everywhere, with demands for a world of more justice and solidarity.

For decades, it has been here, many times in these very rooms of the United Nations where we meet today that social democrats, as men or women of this movement or as representatives or articulators of the will of our fellow citizens, have brought to the fore an important part of our actions and have written our history.

Here, time and again, we social democrats have met to launch and once again take up the dialogue for peace; we have reflected on arms and defined the processes and mechanisms to make our planet a safer place; we have denounced to the international community the violations of human rights and the restrictions on liberties perpetrated by dictatorial regimes; we have advocated a global economy with better regulation, putting the people first and, in more recent time, we have demanded greater respect for the environment as an indispensable commitment for the future.

For social democrats, this organisation is a true symbol and, as such, it has a central place in the identity of our political family. The United Nations allow us to always connect with our heritage and to strengthen our proposal as a movement.

For the International, as for the United Nations, the demand for joint and multilateral actions to confront our most important challenges is not an eleventh hour discovery, but a constant in our actions. We were born, as we have said many times, as a movement which aspired to change the world and which was not a stranger to what was happening outside the national borders of each of our countries. These principles remain today inalterable and have only been reinforced in these times of interdependency and of challenges without borders.

We share this genetic characteristic of global action with the United Nations, an organisation to which we feel extremely close. Each time we come here, or to Geneva or Vienna, or at each opportunity to organise meetings with the United Nations, we are at home.

II ACCOUNT OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL SINCE THE COUNCIL OF SANTO DOMINGO

At the conclusion of the Santo Domingo Council, to which we were warmly welcomed by our comrades of the PRD last 23-25 November, the International indicated its intention to be present in the COP15 in Copenhagen. Our work on the fight against climate change, initiated several years ago, and the quality of the reflection on this theme, which has inspired leaders of our International, led us to believe that as a movement we had to deliver a significant contribution to the Summit, and could not be absent from it.

The International organised exchanges and discussions in which a number of delegates and ministers and some heads of state and governments present in Copenhagen took part. These activities, designed to reaffirm the social democratic priorities and perspectives on key themes on the Conference agenda, included meetings, press conferences, discussions with representatives of civil society and other exchanges with many of the delegates present.

In a press conference which took place in the Bella Centre, site of the COP15, on 16 December, under the title "From a High Carbon Economy to a Low Carbon Society: a global perspective from progressive leaders", Prime Minister George Papandreou, President of the Socialist International; Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for Climate Change and former President of Chile, Ricardo Lagos; Belgian Minister of State Elio di Rupo and the SI Secretary General Luis Ayala, highlighted the conclusions and proposals put forward in the Report of the SI Commission for a Sustainable World Society and stressed the need for the Conference to reach substantial agreement on the core issues of emissions reductions by developed countries, commitments on reductions by developing countries and emerging economies, sufficient financial assistance for developing and most vulnerable countries, a target for a maximum of 2°C increase in temperature, and the need to move forward to a legally binding agreement.

In the same place, during the UN Conference, a meeting was held with delegates, amongst them a number of Ministers of Environment from different regions of the world and other ministers, during which members of the International shared opinions on the debates and negotiations which took place at the Conference, as well as on the expected outcome.

Addressing the plenary of the COP15, Prime Minister Papandreou, after conveying the views and concerns of the Greek people on the themes under discussion, presented to the assembly the main proposals of the Socialist International regarding climate change.

Within the context of the Conference, numerous other discussions were developed with leaders and members of the International, including meetings with civil society, amongst these a meeting between the President and Secretary General of the SI and the Director of Greenpeace International.

Over recent months, I have had many opportunities to follow up on the work of the International in Copenhagen and within the framework of the SWS Commission: In February important

members of our political family attended the 10th Delhi Sustainable Development Summit in New Delhi, where the SI President and I also held meetings with the leadership of the Indian National Congress, including party President Sonia Gandhi and General Secretaries Rahul Gandhi and Digvijay Singh, and we are pleased to welcome Mr Singh to our Council as a result of those discussions.

Another Climate Conference took place in Moscow in late March, hosted by SI member A Just Russia Party, where I again presented the priorities of our movement and the conclusions of our Commission Report, including reflections on the outcome of the COP15 negotiations and our shared objectives as we head towards the COP16 meeting in Cancún. Throughout, the emphasis was on our vision of a common future and a search for common solutions within a multilateral framework, of even greater importance in light of the emissions cuts that will be needed to remain within the 2°C target.

On 20-21 January, a mission of the Socialist International visited Venezuela to hold meetings, interviews and conversations with different national political and social actors. Members of the mission went to Venezuela with an open mind, avoiding making any *a priori* judgements about the state of democracy there, but nonetheless reaffirming the values of the International and our definition of democratic socialism. The conclusions of the mission were compiled into a report, detailing the governmental practice of appropriating the legislative framework in order to ensure its own perpetuity in power, and the sense that President Chávez is all the time searching for new ways to 'legally' impose his will on the Venezuelan people. Evidence was also presented to the mission of the tight governmental control over civil society and the political opposition, and great concern was expressed over the effect that government policy is having on the Venezuelan economy and on regional stability.

The work of the International within other global organisations has long been an important part of our work, and in addition to the aforementioned COP15 Summit, I have represented the International at a number of conferences, summits and meetings in recent months. In February, the Progressive Global Governance Conference took place, organised by the international think-tank Policy Network, under the title *Jobs, industry and opportunity: growth strategies after the crisis*. Speakers from our movement at the conference included SI President George Papandreou, Vice-Presidents Gordon Brown, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero and Mona Sahlin, and Jens Stoltenberg, Prime Minister of Norway.

As a result of our successful efforts to gain observer status within the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), which we were granted last year, I attended the 122nd IPU Assembly in Bangkok from 27 March until 1 April, which was convened under the theme 'Parliaments at the heart of political reconciliation and good governance', before returning to the Asia-Pacific region later that month for a meeting of the Movement for Democracy, as a guest of the National Democratic Institute (NDI), and participating in a panel on the role of the party Internationals.

Solidarity and social democratic priorities

The meeting of the SI Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean convened in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on 9-10 April 2010, brought together over 100 participants from 33 member parties,

organisations and guests , focussing its discussions on four main themes: (i) Solidarity as a central pillar of social democracy: current humanitarian challenges in Latin America and the Caribbean; (ii) The role of the state, governments and public policies in the region to stimulate the economy, to combat poverty and to reduce inequality; (iii) How to advance the social democratic priorities of jobs, health, education and social security in the region; and (iv) Strengthening democratic institutions and deepening citizen participation.

Under the first theme, special contributions were made by leaders from Haiti and Chile, two countries which have been recently shaken by devastating earthquakes. A Resolution on Haiti was adopted by the Committee reaffirming its solidarity with the Haitian people, calling for continued support for the reconstruction of the devastated areas, and urging the SI member parties in Haiti to strengthen their strategy of unity with other democratic political forces in the country leading to a new political force for real change. A Declaration on Chile was also adopted in which solidarity with the Chilean people was expressed along with appreciation for the efforts of the '*Concertación*'. A Motion in Solidarity with Brazil was also agreed following the recent natural disasters in the State of Rio de Janeiro.

The Committee also agreed on a Declaration on the International Financial Crisis, a crisis which had originated in the economies of the North with serious repercussions on the whole world economy, including those of Latin America and the Caribbean. A Declaration on Puerto Rico was adopted reiterating the Committee's call for SI member parties to support the unanimous request by the UN Special Committee on Decolonisation for the General Assembly to examine the case of Puerto Rico, as well as a Declaration on the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) reaffirming support for the Argentinean position in relation to sovereignty and calling on the governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom to resume negotiations in order to reach an early just, peaceful and definitive solution to the dispute in line with relevant resolutions and declarations of the United Nations and the Organisation of American States.

On the situation in Venezuela, the Committee heard the Report of the mission to Caracas in January, which will be presented at this Council, and contributions from the Venezuelan delegates. A Declaration on Venezuela was agreed on by the Committee, expressing its concern in regard to the respect for human rights and democratic freedoms in that country, requesting the liberation of political prisoners and the return of refugees, reiterating its call for dialogue between all Venezuelan political actors.

On 10 May I made a trip to Washington DC to attend the 25th Anniversary Dinner of the NDI, where the guest of honour was MDC (Zimbabwe) leader Morgan Tsvangirai, an event which further strengthened our relationship with the American Democratic Party. This dinner was preceded on the same day by a lunch of the three Internationals, which was a continuation of the discussions held at the panel discussions at the NDI-organised meeting in Bangkok, hosted by former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and former Governor Howard Dean, with the participation of my counterparts from the Liberal and Christian Democrat Internationals.

Combating poverty and achieving the MDGs

Following the principle agreed in Vienna last year at its first meeting that the following one should take place in Africa, the SI Committee on Social Cohesion, Poverty and HIV/AIDS met in Accra, Ghana on 24 May. The discussions focussed on the two main themes of 'Strategies to combat poverty: the role of the state and public policies, and how to transform commodity revenues into real development' and 'Achieving the Millennium Development Goals: the United Nations September Summit'.

Two years since the start of the recession, the topics discussed by the committee were current and pertinent, and the participants reiterated many times that the individual should re-emerge over the market which has become dominant. The market must become more ethical and an equilibrium must be found between market and state in order that the latter can respond to the essential needs of the individual – jobs, education, fair pensions and health to name but a few.

With Africa a continent profoundly marked by the themes discussed, the importance of partnership between beneficiaries of aid, who are mostly African, and donors of development aid must be highlighted, in order to improve the quality of assistance and to better respond to the needs of developing countries. There was also an acknowledgement that at current levels and in its current form, aid provided to many countries in Africa is insufficient.

The debates held were enhanced significantly by the key-note contributions made by Mahamadou Issoufou, (President, Party for Democracy and Socialism, Niger and SI Vice-President), Ahmed Daddah (President, RFD, Mauritania), Bruno Amoussou (President, PSD, Benin) and Léopold Gnininvi (Secretary General, CPDA, Togo). The SI hopes to contribute to better governance, in particular in Africa, through its values and practical application of its principles, whilst fighting for consolidation of political parties, strengthening of civil society and the guarantee of democratic practices such as free and transparent elections.

Defending democracy

In Tirana, on 29 May, a meeting of the Committee for South Eastern Europe was held with particular emphasis on finding a resolution to the ongoing political crisis in Albania. Under the headings of 'Strengthening democracy in the region' and 'Advancing stability, fair institutions and regional cooperation', the Committee discussed the deficiencies of democracy and transparency present during the elections of 28 June 2009, which were still casting a shadow over the prospects of economic development and EU integration in Albania.

Discussing regional cooperation, members of the Committee acknowledged the need for stronger collaboration between social democrats of the region, and the important role the SI has to play in fostering this cooperation, with many delegates expressing a desire to see this take the form of member parties observing elections and monitoring the general situation in neighbouring countries.

At the conclusion of the meeting, a Resolution was unanimously adopted which, taking into account the input of all Committee members during the day, called unequivocally for an investigation into the electoral violations, recognising that full transparency in future elections was the only way to ensure that the current crisis was not replicated, and guarantee the long-term stability of the Albanian political system.

Natural resource management

The SI Committee on Economic Policy, Labour and Natural Resources met on 4 June in Moscow to discuss economic and social development issues in Russia and other CIS states and the effective, efficient use of natural and labour resources during the economic crisis, and to prepare a draft resolution for this Council meeting, entitled *The Challenges of Global Development in 2010 – The economic, social, environmental and cultural dimensions*.

Delegates reasserted the importance of social democracy in tackling the major economic problems which remain a concern today, recognising that this a moment for strong reaffirmation of what the social democratic movement and its ideology represent. Also underlined were the responsible use and management of natural resources, and the importance of stable energy prices to enable more efficient polities on energy saving and more effective management of energy resources.

Conflict resolution

Just ten days ago, on 11-12 June, and for the first time since the outbreak of open conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, Azeri and Armenian politicians met in Yerevan to discuss the role that social democracy could play in bringing about a resolution to their ongoing dispute, at a meeting of the SI Committee for the CIS, the Caucasus and the Black Sea. The presence of the Deputy Chair of the Social Democratic Party of Azerbaijan (SDPA) in Yerevan, to discuss Nagorno-Karabakh amongst other issues was a testament to the ability of the International to bring together actors from both sides of a political divide, aiming to resolve differences peacefully and through dialogue.

Members of the Committee gave individual reports on their national situations, outlining both areas of success and causes for concern in the region. The advancement of social democracy in the region showed much promise, with social democratic parties developing in nine of the twelve CIS states. The development and consolidation of democracy, however, has been far from uniform in the region, with delegates reporting on a lack of electoral transparency and fair institutions, limitations on political activity and the difficulty in overcoming the negative connotations that many people still associate with socialist and social democratic parties as the main obstacles to increasing their parties' strength.

The Committee members took the decision in many of these cases to actively involve the International in the development of democracy and in support of its members, resolving to organise missions to Belarus, Georgia and Azerbaijan to monitor both the general political climate and, in the case of Azerbaijan, the elections of this autumn. The decision was also taken that the Committee should hold future meetings both in Belarus and in Azerbaijan, with the emphasis on reinforcing the support of the International for all the socialist and social-democratic opposition

parties in the former, and continuing with the productive debate that was held on Nagorno-Karabakh in the latter. The idea that Georgia could be the venue for a roundtable discussion on peace with the participation social democrats from Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia was also proposed, along with the hope that that country could become a hub of peace and stability in the region.

The new crisis

With this Council meeting taking place just before the G-20, an important meeting of the SI Commission on Global Financial Issues took place here in New York on Saturday (20 June), chaired by our President George Papandreou. The discussions that were held at this meeting centred on the next phase of the financial crisis which has been triggered by the instability in the Euro zone and concerns over sovereign debt, and examined the reasons for the latest problems and what should be our response as social democrats.

Members of the Commission, united in their support for and solidarity with George Papandreou and the people and government of Greece, underlined that it was state intervention that had to a large extent prevented the crisis that started two years ago from developing into a much larger financial disaster, and that it was in many cases necessary to incur public debt as part of stimulus packages that put the economy on the road to recovery. This recovery is now seriously threatened by speculators who are generating pressure over public debt, leading to premature abandonment of the very measures that were helping the recovery and by the irresponsible and undemocratic behaviour of ratings agencies.

The Commission also discussed proposals for a Financial Transaction Tax, an initiative that was discussed at the recent European Council meeting. It is estimated that in Europe alone, €200,000 million could be raised per year as a result of a tax of 0.05% on financial transactions, which could be used for infrastructure growth, to develop the green economy and to help poorer economies in Africa, Asia and Latin America, and that if Europe as the largest economy in the world were to implement such a tax it would create the momentum for a global initiative. SI President Papandreou reiterated that it was only through multilateral action that such a move could be successfully implemented, and that here, the social democratic principle of cooperation had to prevail confronted with the go-it-alone policies of conservatives.

I have also been able to maintain excellent relationships with a large number of our member parties, strengthening our common social democratic ties, by holding meetings with party leaders and representatives on numerous occasions over the course of the last few months, as well as participating in discussions and congresses on behalf of our International. Congresses I have recently attended include the SAMAK Nordic Congress in Denmark earlier this month, the PES Congress in Prague of December last year, and the IUSY Congress in March which took place in Stockholm. I am particularly pleased, therefore, to be able to welcome to this Council the newly elected IUSY Presidium, who represent the future of our movement. Following the electoral success of our member party in Costa Rica, I was delighted to be able to attend the inauguration of

the new President there, Laura Chinchilla, as a way of expressing our movement's hope for her success, and its recognition of the achievements of former President Oscar Arias.

In the period since the last Council, the Latin American and Caribbean region has been struck by two natural disasters, with serious consequences for many of our comrades. Following the earthquake of 13 January in Haiti, which resulted in much tragic loss of life, the SI expressed its solidarity with the people of Haiti, and with its member parties, the Union of Haitian Social Democrats and the OPL. Since this time, we have maintained a close relationship with our Vice-President in that country, Victor Benoit who is present here today, and to whom we continue to offer our support and friendship. Then, on 27 February, a huge earthquake and tsunami struck my country, Chile, causing considerable human and material loss in central and southern regions and coastal areas. I was able to visit our colleagues in Chile in the weeks following the earthquake, to personally convey the support of the International for the reconstruction efforts.

Since the last Council the International has also noted with great sadness the passing of two towering figures of social democracy. Michael Foot, the former leader of the British Labour Party, who died on 3 March aged 96, was a masterful orator admired by friends, colleagues and political rivals alike. Former Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala died on 19 March aged 85, after a life dedicated to bringing peace and democracy to Nepal. Regretfully, due to current instability in that country, there can be no member of the Nepali Congress Party here with us at our Council meeting, reinforcing the need for a swift resolution to the current constitutional crisis there, which would offer great hope for the future to the people of Nepal, and at the same time be a fitting tribute to his life's work.

Our political family was also directly touched by the tragic Smolensk air crash, that as well as claiming the life of the President of Poland, Lech Kaczynski, numbered among its victims three members of our member party the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD): Jerzy Szmajdzinski, MP, party Vice-President and Deputy Speaker of the Polish Parliament, Jolanta Szymanek-Deresz, MP, party Vice-President in charge of Foreign Affairs, and Izabela Jaruga-Nowacka, MP. My thoughts, and those of our entire political family are with the friends and families of those we have lost in 2010.

Looking forward

I am pleased to announce that the next Council meeting of the SI will take place in November in Paris, hosted by the French Socialist Party. The intervening period will be a busy time for both me and the International, as we continue to work to advance social democratic principles and values throughout the world.

We will of course be following electoral proceedings with much interest. Though in recent times electoral fortunes for our members parties have been mixed, there are grounds for optimism with regard to upcoming elections, with high hopes for success in the Nordic region in particular.

Another place where electoral developments will be closely monitored is in the Republic of Moldova, where a country wide referendum due to take place in September will lead, if successful, to direct presidential elections in November, with great prospects for victory by a candidate from our political family. Autumn will also see elections in Azerbaijan, where a mission of the SI will be

organised as agreed at the recent meeting of the Committee for the CIS, the Caucasus and the Black Sea, as part of our commitment to playing a role in the development of democracy in that region.

The next inter-Council period will also contain meetings of several of the SI's regional and thematic Committees, with further meetings of the Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean, for the CIS the Caucasus and the Black Sea, and on Economic Policy, Labour and Natural Resources to take place in accordance with decisions taken in Buenos Aires, in Yerevan and in Moscow. Also planned are meetings of our Africa Committee, with the location yet to be confirmed and of the Asia-Pacific and Mediterranean Committees, which will happen in Malaysia and Lebanon respectively. The Mediterranean Committee will be convened in advance of the rescheduled EuroMed Summit, aiming to deliver a strong message on the social democratic priorities for the region to that summit. Meetings of the Committee on Disarmament in Russia, and the Migration Committee, in Italy are equally planned during the next six months.

CLOSING REMARKS

This report of activities of the International in the inter-Council period is representative of a vibrant, dynamic organisation, acting in a timely and decisive manner in the places in which the presence and message of progressive political forces is required.

We are committed to the electoral process, peace negotiations and actions to deal with pandemics, the debt of developing countries, the arms race or extreme poverty, to name but a few of the constant concerns of our movement. Likewise, the demands of displaced people and migrants, of vulnerable groups, of ethnic minorities have a place and a response within our organisation.

There is no evil that threatens our people which is not cause for our concern, which does not find a place on our agenda, which is not integrated into our political reflection and which does not express itself in concrete proposals and actions as an International.

Today our road map coincides, once more, with the agenda of the United Nations. We fully endorse the objectives of the Millennium Development Goals of (1) eradicating poverty and hunger; (2) achieving universal primary education; (3) advancing gender equality; (4) reducing infant mortality; (5) improving maternal health; (6) combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other serious diseases; (7) ensuring environmental sustainability; and (8) developing a Global Partnership for Development.

With our Presidium we will be here again at the UN in September this year responding to the call of the UN Secretary General to convene a Summit between 22-24 September to consolidate progress and add impetus to the actions taken to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. This Summit comes at a crucial moment for the accomplishment of these objectives, as outlined in the meeting of the SI Committee on Social Cohesion, Poverty and HIV/AIDS in May. With current progress suggesting that nearly all of the Goals for 2015 are likely to be missed, we

must reaffirm our movement's support for these objectives, and the Presidium meeting will focus on formulating a social democratic plan to present to the Summit.

The second important global summit of the next six months will be the COP16 Climate Change Summit, which will take place in Cancún at the end of November, shortly after our next Council meeting. With this Summit firmly in mind, a meeting of our Commission for a Sustainable World Society will be convened in Mexico prior to the next Council to address the priorities of our movement as we move on from Copenhagen, reaffirming our priorities with the expectation of a breakthrough in the fight against devastating climate change.

The challenges give also a great opportunity to give a response. We live in an era in which, at this time like no other, our own International has the chance to make the difference.

Just a short time ago we were going through a process of the reform of unilateralism. We know of its serious consequences with respect to the weakening of global governance. The blockage and the loss of credibility of the international institutions which guarantee peace and development with justice and solidarity, had extremely serious consequences, triggering the economic crisis and aggravating the environmental crisis with which we are faced today.

In these moments we were not, nor have we ever been, passive or mere spectators of these dangerous drifts. Quite the contrary, we have strongly denounced them and fought against them as an International and as political parties from positions of government or from the opposition.

But that which I want to underline, to which I wish to return, is that today we are living in times of rapid change and of a redefinition of national, regional and global models. Our International has not had the disorientation of other political forces during these times marked by confusion. Loyal to our principles, we are creative and efficient in our methods and clear in the objectives we are pursuing. Multilateralism, regulation, the role of the state, the need for more justice and solidarity in our relationships, the people at the centre of our proposals and actions, are ideas, are realities which are back and which – with the work of the social democrats – are here to stay.

In this process of reconstruction the International is called upon to design the architecture of what we want and to advance towards the realisation of our proposals. Being only a few in the beginning, we wanted to change the world. Today we are motivated by the same energy and the same conviction than yesterday because we have a positive vision of human beings, formed not by insecurity and fear, but by confidence and optimism. Optimism and confidence in our own capacity as a movement to change the future. We are significant actors in the great debates of our time. In our International, realism and desire are joined together, with neither paradox nor contradiction: the dreams of today will be the realities of tomorrow.

As we reflect on this latest period in the history of the Socialist International, we are once more presented with the evidence that it is our ideology that holds the responses to the great crises with which we are faced today. The impact of the financial, climate and energy crises is being felt most by those least able to bear that impact, and we have a responsibility as progressives and social

democrats to once more put our principles at the fore of all that we do. We are faced with a battleground of ideals; we must stand up to those who advocate policies that leave the people responsible for solving the problems caused by the banks, to those who deny climate change, leading us further down the road to climate disaster, and to those in whose interests it is to perpetuate our unsustainable dependency on finite energy resources.

The work we have ahead of us is challenging, but by overcoming great challenges we can achieve great success. Over the next few months, we must once again focus our efforts and unite to advance our common values and objectives. We have recently shown once again what can be achieved if we put our differences aside, when bringing together our Armenian and Azeri member parties in Yerevan.

Today we reiterate our commitment, determination and joy to have before us the great cause of human dignity, of solidarity between individuals and peoples and of respect for our environment.