

Meeting of the SI Committee for the CIS, Caucasus and Black Sea  
St. Petersburg, Russian Federation, 25-26 May 2018

**DECLARATION**

The Socialist International Committee for the CIS, Caucasus and Black Sea, meeting in Saint Petersburg, Russia on 25-26 May 2018, hosted by the SI member Just Russia Party, discussed the contribution of our movement to the advancement of democracy and its institutions; to resolving and preventing conflicts and strengthening peace in the region; and to moving forward a common strategy for strengthening social democracy in the region.

The Committee took note that social democracy is a growing movement in this region where member parties are playing an increasing role in the political life in different countries, and reaffirmed that the principles and values that inspire our International are recognised and shared by a growing number of citizens, giving way to a greater representation of SI member parties in social movements, parliaments and governments across the region. The Committee noted that the work of our members in favour of fundamental freedoms and rights, and on behalf of the most vulnerable, had contributed to advance democratic goals and consolidate peace. Nevertheless, there remained much to do.

Amongst the issues that Committee members highlighted was the need to guarantee the provision for all citizens in countries of the CIS, Caucasus and Black sea, of open and equal access to the diverse print and electronic media, such as TV, radio, internet and other sources of information, including the official media, opposition and foreign sources of the press. The imposition of barriers, including those sanctioned by legislation, to the free distribution of and access to reliable information were strongly objected to, along with different methods of influencing or affecting the free mass media and those working in it, including prosecution of local and foreign journalists.

The Committee regretted the ongoing armed stand-off in South East Ukraine and called for a peaceful settlement of this conflict in line with the Minsk Agreements and the Normandy format. The Committee appealed to both President Vladimir Putin of Russia and President Petr Poroshenko of Ukraine, to adopt a humanitarian initiative and exchange prisoners: the Ukrainians imprisoned in Russia for the Russians imprisoned in Ukraine, based on the “all for all” principle.

Regarding Belarus, the Committee expressed its concern over the ongoing pressure put upon members and representatives of civil society, on the SI member party Social Democratic Party “Narodnaya Gramada”, the radio-electronic trade union and on other democratic and social organisations in the country. The Committee called on the authorities to immediately stop all politically motivated oppression and to release all political prisoners. The Committee equally appealed to the Belarussian authorities for greater transparency of the electoral processes and vote counting mechanisms in that country.

In regard to the situation in Armenia, the Committee expressed its support for the popular movement and applauded all sides for the peaceful transition of power that had taken place, hoping that the process will continue to proceed based on the Constitution of the country. The Committee supported the SI member party in Armenia, the ARF-Dashnaksutyun, in its persistent efforts to reform the state government, aimed at establishing a parliamentary system in which the separation of powers among the legislative, executive and judicial branches of government is

complete. In this context, the Committee supported its member party in its struggle against illegal monopolies, corruption, in favour of social justice, and for greater powers to the parliamentary opposition, for a more decentralised system of government and for a more open, transparent and accountable government at all levels.

Concerning the increasing use and application of sanctions as a political tool in the relations between states, the Committee, taking into account the need for increased dialogue and contact between the different political actors internationally to overcome differences, considered that such measures should exclude the travel restrictions imposed on political leaders and members of parliament who normally enjoy immunity in democratic political systems.

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