

**MEETING OF THE XXV CONGRESS OF THE SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL**

**Cartagena, Colombia, 2-3-4 March 2017**

**Speech by George Papandreou**

**President of the Socialist International**

Dear President Santos,

Dear co- chairs of the CLP Horacio Serpa and Alejandro Chacon,

Dear Comrades from Colombia ,

A warm thanks from all of us for the hospitality you have shown us.  
A welcome to all of you who have travelled from far corners of the planet to participate in our Congress.

Cartagena is one of the most beautiful cities in the world, a place of magic that has inspired so many writers and artists.

When I read Gabriel Garcia Marquez, I could not imagine that I someday visit Cartagena.

We made a conscious choice to bring our Congress here - to Colombia.

We are humbled by President Santos and his government's courage, determination and contribution to peace.

We are here in solidarity with your efforts.

Efforts to end the violence that has claimed so many lives and created so much pain in Colombia.

Efforts that need be supported by all forces of society.

National reconciliation is a fragile and difficult process.

However when achieved it is the way to a lasting and just peace.

What you have already achieved has importance even beyond Colombia.

At a time of universal change and upheaval, at a time where many feel our global society has lost its direction, you stand out as a lighthouse of hope.

At a time where many leaders are choosing a politics of polarization and fear, such as your big neighbor to the North, you have shown there is a different path of successful leadership bringing peace and reconciliation.

For us, the Socialist International, this is of utmost importance.

Our legacy is fighting for common values, ones that can unite, bridge conflict, wipe out inequalities and injustices, respect human lives and dignity.

This is our legacy - this is what unites us.

And we know.

We are an international movement.

We, the many that sit here before you, we all have our personal stories.

We come from different backgrounds, nationalities and histories.

Many fought against neo-colonialism from Asia to Africa

Others fought for democracy in what used to be called banana republics.

I know - Greece, although not in Latin America, was very much a banana republic in the sixties and seventies when my family was forced into exile.

Others here fought against the wall called apartheid in South Africa

Many in Europe and the world, fought for just societies, for humanizing capitalism, by providing decent wages and employment, health and education, child care and gender equality.

Others have been in the forefront for human rights, minority rights, racial equality, gender rights, the rights of LGBT's.

Willy Brandt, one of our outstanding leaders whom Luis Ayala worked closely with, fought against the North-South divide asking for major transfers of wealth from the rich north to the underdeveloped and poverty stricken south.

He also championed the Ostpolitik, or a peaceful rapprochement between the east and the west in the midst of the Cold War.

Important part of our legacy is also Olof Palme, whom I personally knew.

Two days ago, the 28th of February was the anniversary of the assassination of Olof Palme.

A leader who devoted his life to peace.

Who stood tall against the war in Vietnam.

One who did not blur tactics or use populist rhetoric for electoral goals. Who defended the need to give a home to refugees in Sweden.

He knew the means to power were as important as the end goals themselves.

Amongst us are Palestinians and Israelis.

They have been fighting against occupation, for peace and understanding, for a just two state solution where a viable Palestinian state can live side by side with a secure Israel.

Many here have been working for peace in Syria, the Caucasus, Greece and Turkey, Cyprus, the Balkans.

Many here have been refugees, others have been persecuted, all have been challenged.

Our women, SI Women are strong proponents of equality both in their societies and in their parties.

So dear President, dear Colombian friends, we come from diverse backgrounds, ethnicities, races, geographies and experiences.

Although diverse - we are united.

And what keeps us united are our common values.

We are proud patriots of our individual or national identities.

But we also are patriots to our values.

We are united.

We are united in our basic beliefs in peace, cooperation, respect, dignity, tolerance, sustainability, democracy, equality.

And our SI President, whom I succeeded, Antonio Guterres, has taken on the UN at one of the most difficult moments in recent history, to fight for these values.

As the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states

'All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.'

We abide by universal principles that strive to unite - not divide - humanity

These words inspire our actions as your actions President Santos inspire our hopes.

The challenges we face today

Today, more than ever, we need to reaffirm the strong moral base of our values.

These will give direction and new hope as we, the totality of humanity, are facing major new challenges.

Allow me to mention five such basic challenges.

1- We are witnessing the end of the North Atlantic Age. An age of the near total domination of the west of the rest of the world - at least economically.

The North Atlantic is being eclipsed by East Asia.

In the 1990's China was 6% of the world economy, today it is 23%

At its pinnacle the USA was 40% of the world economy today it is 15%

2) Demography has changed the shape of the world:

Africa alone will contribute 80% of global population growth - that is 3.2 billion new human beings by 2100.

From 447 million in 1980 it is projected to be 2.4 billion in 2050.

The wider Mideast also has an explosion of population. This represents both the coming of age of Africa but also the huge challenges on the issues of jobs, inclusiveness, governance and migration.

3) Humanity's biggest - possibly - challenge is Climate Change.

Today we can easily wreck the planet.

Destroy our own civilization.

Our movement created a commission chaired by former President of Chile Ricardo Lagos and former Prime Minister of Sweden Joran Persson that worked hard to develop proposals for the Copenhagen Summit. We succeeded - although the summit was not a success.

Many of our proposals however were finally adopted in the Paris agreement.

An historic one, where the international community proved it could cooperate to deal with this crucial global problem.

4) Although globalization contributed immensely to lower poverty levels, particularly due to the Chinese economy bringing millions out of poverty, it also created unprecedented inequalities.

This is central to our agenda in the SI.

We have historically been champions of a just society.

We have invented and implemented policies such as the New Deal or the Social Contract in modern society.

We have guaranteed a sense of security and opportunity for all.

Today, because of globalization as well as the dominance of neo-liberal policies, capital and those who control it, are able to avoid their duties to our societies.

Just one clear and striking example:

Some experts now estimate that offshore wealth alone - wealth beyond the reach of governments - exceeds \$25 TRILLION—more than the combined GDP of three-quarters of the nations of the world.

This has had enormous consequences:

Income and wealth inequalities corrode the chances for a just society, by systematically lowering students' educational performance, raising crime rates, drug and human trafficking, multiplying distrust of governments and fellow citizens, allowing pollution, ignoring illness, amplifying violence against women and children, and blocking upward mobility.

Moreover the concentration of power by the few has captured if not corrupted our democratic institutions bringing huge frustration to our citizens.

5) Finally our digital revolution, momentous as that of the agricultural or industrial revolution, has become

a double edged sword.

For example robotics with artificial intelligence already destroy jobs but may permanently replace millions of workers - and not only menial jobs.

Who owns the robots - the means of production?

Who will reap the profits?

Will the unemployed be marginalized?

Or will we move to a society of creative citizens provided for by guaranteed income - an experiment being tried in countries like Finland.

How will we achieve just income distribution?

All will change profoundly.

From our capacity to create life, to moonshots, to media and communications, finance, defence, security, privacy, human rights, crime, work, to governance - our democracies - and our individual well-being.

Today humanity has godlike powers.

From Homo Sapiens we have become Home Deus.

Artificial intelligence, augmented reality, robotics, bio-engineering, has and will continue to change everything.

This poses profound questions and challenges.

In Ancient Greece the abuse of power was Hubris.

Or blasphemy to the Gods.

Today we are challenged to use our new powers in a humble way.

One that ensures our common good.

So yes the challenge today is not a technical one.

It is a deeply moral one.

Which are the values that will guide us in this new era of civilization?

That is why your example here in Colombia President Santos, and dear friends of the PLC, is of such importance.

It is the moral compass we need.

Not climate change, not the future of Africa, not the positive use of technology, not the new power balance in the world, nor inequality can be dealt with through so called free markets - as neo-liberals have espoused.

Nor will we find solutions through 21st century neo-populism.

Ideologues and opportunists who have seized the moment by playing on insecurity and pain, in Europe, in

the United States, in Asia, in Africa, in the Middle East.  
Who do not offer solutions - but more problems.

I know it from our experience in Greece.  
Where the weaker suffer from the harsh policies of austerity but also from fake news, polarization,  
demonization, fear and neo-populism.

We in the SI choose to differ.

Our response to a changing global society is not isolationism.  
It is not hatred and nationalism.  
It is not walls and bans on religions.  
It is not authoritarianism and disrespect of our fellow human beings or of the rule of law.  
It cannot be found in dogmatism and violence.

We do differ - profoundly:

They believe in the value of powerful leaders - We believe in leaders that strengthen our values

Their question is how to get and maintain power - ours is how to better use power for the common good

They believe in making their countries great by building walls, investing in weapons and unilateral  
decisions.

We believe in making our countries great by investing in human beings, their education, their welfare and  
their capacity to cooperate in a global economy.

They say 'take back control' and mean isolationism, Brexits, closing borders,  
We say 'take back control' and mean fighting inequality, empowering our citizens, strengthening our  
democracies, respecting human dignity and rights

They say cut taxes for the rich, we say cut tax havens that rob the poor

They believe in the freedom of the market, we believe in the freedom of our citizens

Their leaders need no advisors other than themselves, our leaders seek out the deliberation and ideas of  
all

They believe democracy is an impediment to decision making we believe democracy is a guarantee for  
good decision making

Their say 'I will give you a voice' meaning 'the leaders voice'.  
We say 'we will give you a voice' meaning your voice will be heard and respected in a participative  
democracy.

They like to produce fake facts  
We want to search out the real facts.

We want technology to serve the people, they want technology to serve their power.

They play on fear, we work on hope.

They see enemies of the people in anything different.

We see new partners in the diversity of our world

They polarize society when they are up against a challenging problem, we create consensus in order to solve the problem.

They say they are fighting the establishment yet are part of it.

We say we need to change the established order so that everyone can be part of our inclusive society.

We differ.

But our voice need be heard.

And our actions need be today.

President Santos, dear friends from Colombia,

Your example is one of the leadership we need in today's world.

You have been able to bring together a vision, one of peace and cooperation.

You have also been able to show an intelligence through your commitment, preservanance and patience.

Finally you have shown heart.

This is not always recognized.

Not always recognized in so many politicians that do in fact try to change the world because they believe in a better one.

Cynicism, fake news, deconstruction of efforts, character assassination are methods I am well aware of from my experience.

Do not be discouraged,

What you have done could not have been accomplished if it did not also come from the heart.

I commend you, we commend you and we are here because we believe in your efforts - in peace in Colombia as well as the world.