

Statement following the annual meeting of
the SI Presidium and Heads of State and Government
United Nations, New York, 21 September 2017

In recent weeks and months, a series of natural disasters have caused death and destruction in different regions of the world. The SI stands in solidarity with all those who have suffered loss of loved ones, property and livelihood, including the victims of the Mexican earthquake, successive major hurricanes in the Caribbean, mudslides in Sierra Leone and flooding in Nepal, India and Bangladesh. Many of those countries affected are facing severe economic challenges and will therefore require international support and solidarity as they seek to rebuild following these tragic developments. The number of extreme weather events during 2017 also underlines the necessity of concerted action to address the climatic changes that are increasing the likelihood of such incidents occurring with more frequency.

The maintenance of international peace and security

The current threats to global peace and security are of great concern to the nations of the world, and the United Nations, as the preeminent forum for the multilateral pursuit of international peace and security, has today a crucial task ahead of it.

The grave situation on the Korean peninsula is a challenge to the entire international community. The atomic weapons that have been developed by the North Korean regime represent a major threat to stability and peace in Asia and the Pacific, with global repercussions. Recent aggressive and provocative actions by North Korea are further destabilising the region, showing a failure by the regime to comply with its international obligations. The potential for conflict between states with the capability to launch nuclear weapons is a chilling prospect. No effort must be spared in seeking a diplomatic solution to this crisis, in order to avert a potential catastrophe.

All efforts to bring peace to Syria must be supported, in line with consistent calls made by the SI for dialogue and negotiation. This includes the most recent talks held in Astana aimed at establishing de-escalation zones in Syria. We welcome the decline in strength and influence of Daesh, and the priority in the short term must be ending the violence and bloodshed.

Across the Middle East, populations that are subject to terror require the support and solidarity of the global community. In Iraq, the defeat and withdrawal of Daesh must be accompanied by assistance in rebuilding for those who are left behind in the aftermath. In Yemen, the desperate humanitarian situation must be addressed. Indiscriminate air strikes have claimed the lives of thousands of civilians, and the armed conflict has left nearly 20 million Yemenis in need of humanitarian assistance. This conflict deserves the full and urgent attention of the international community. Credible reports of violations of international law and human rights must be independently investigated.

The move towards reconciliation in Palestine is a welcome development and the SI supports Palestinian efforts to renew the democratic process and convene national

elections as soon as possible. This should serve as a catalyst for concerted efforts to achieve the two-state solution, which requires the recognition of the State of Palestine on the June 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital. As previously outlined by the SI Council, the collective efforts of the international community are required to bring an end to the occupation of Palestinian land and allow the Palestinian people their right to self-determination.

In the Sahel region, President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita (Mali), President Mahamadou Issoufou (Niger) and President Roch Marc Christian Kaboré (Burkina Faso) are playing a crucial role in the fight to end terror and bring security and stability. The establishment of a joint task force to tackle terrorism in the Sahel with the key regional actors is a positive development and the SI urges international partners to offer their full support to this endeavour. It is equally crucial that military action against terrorist groups in the Sahel is accompanied with concerted action to reduce poverty and unemployment, which have been shown to be the best recruiting tool for terrorist and extremist groups.

The Presidium reiterated the call made by the SI to end the violence in Rakhine province, Myanmar, where a humanitarian crisis is underway following a severe escalation of the discrimination suffered by the Rohingya people. It condemned the systematic persecution of this minority in Myanmar and underlined the need for the government of that country to allow independent monitors to the affected areas to verify reports of pillage, executions and forced displacements at the hands of the military. Though the attacks made by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army should be condemned, the disproportionate and indiscriminate military response against a marginalised community is completely unjustified and in contravention of basic human rights. The UN and the international community should exert pressure on the government of Myanmar to uphold the rule of law, and the SI Presidium echoed the recent call by the UN Secretary-General for the suspension of military action, the right of return for those forced to leave the country, and allowing the delivery of humanitarian aid by the UN and other international organisations.

Conflict, insecurity and persecution are major causes of the unprecedented migratory flows in the world today. The resolution of the global refugee crisis requires a great deal of compassion and solidarity, in particular from those countries in the developed world that have the capacity to welcome those in desperate need of assistance.

The successful conclusion of peace talks on the future of Cyprus are necessary to end the unacceptable status quo and to bring the benefits of mutual coexistence on the island. The SI continues to support talks aiming to reach a bizonal, bicomunal federation for Cyprus.

The crisis in Venezuela continues to be extremely troubling, as the regime fails in its democratic duty to its citizens, resulting in further economic hardship and suffering for the people of that country. The deprivation of the democratic rights of Venezuelans must come to an end, all political prisoners must be released and the powers of the Parliament must be recognised and restored. In Guatemala, the rule of law must be upheld and the justice sector strengthened. Accordingly, the important work of the

International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) should continue free from hindrance or interference.

The promotion of sustained economic growth and sustainable development

The SI remains fully committed to economic growth that is sustainable in the long-term, acknowledging the need to take a unified approach to the problems of poverty, inequality and climate change.

Concerted efforts are still needed to achieve the objective of zero hunger in the world, and the recent rise in global hunger is a disturbing development. Last year, the number of undernourished people increased significantly to 815 million, reaching the highest level in nearly a decade. This trend must be reversed. Deterioration in the food security situation in many of the poorer regions of the world is directly linked to conflict and climate-related shocks, underlining the importance of taking action to resolve conflicts and minimise climate change.

Persistent economic inequality within and between countries and regions is a severe problem and a catalyst for grievances and conflict in all regions of the world. The continued existence of poverty is unacceptable while the richest 1% continue to accumulate more wealth.

Climate change remains the single greatest threat to economic prosperity, food security and future quality of life on this planet. The renewed commitment of the vast majority of governments to the Paris Agreement on climate change is in this regard to be welcomed. This sends a strong signal that there is an overwhelming resolve within the international community to do what is necessary to mitigate anthropomorphic climate change, which will not be derailed by reticence and equivocation from individual member states.

The inseparability of these problems underlines the importance of the Global Goals for Sustainable Development, which are a central feature of the political programmes of SI member parties. The lack of progress and in some areas regression that has taken place since the adoption of the goals in 2015 is a cause for concern. If the Global Goals are to be achieved by 2030, there needs to be concerted action in all areas, with accountability and monitoring of progress to identify the goals that are in danger of being missed.

The role of the United Nations

In the face of the many serious and multi-faceted threats to security, prosperity and sustainability, the SI Presidium reinforced the central role that the UN must play, both in resolving conflicts between member states and in responding to global problems that no country can tackle alone. There is no other multilateral intergovernmental organisation that can substitute for the UN, and it is up to all member states to work within its framework to face up to the common challenges confronting humanity. For the UN to succeed, it needs more engagement from its member states, not less. A strong UN and a robust system of global governance should not be seen as a threat to national sovereignty, but a mutual benefit to all countries of the world.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres has the full support of our movement and all its members as he works to uphold the values of the UN charter and promote multilateralism, conflict resolution, peace and sustainable development. These are the goals of social democracy and will remain at the heart of the agenda of the SI and its member parties.