



Council Meeting of the Socialist International  
Casablanca, 31 May – 1 June 2002

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL

## REPORT OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL

### INTRODUCTION

I am pleased to present my report to the Council in Casablanca, and would like to thank our host, the Socialist Union of Popular Forces, USFP, and its First Secretary, Prime Minister Abderrahman Yousoufi.

This is the first time that Morocco will be the venue for our Council, but a number of other important SI gatherings have been held here, hosted by the USFP, a very active member of our International. We remember fondly the meeting of the SI Mediterranean Committee in Tangier in 1997, while in 1998 over two hundred and fifty mayors, members of municipal governments and organisations, and experts gathered in the city of Fez to take part in our Second World Conference of Mayors. Then, in 2000, the SI Middle East Committee, SIMEC, convened in Casablanca. Finally, we organised a meeting of the SI Committee on the Economy, Social Cohesion and the Environment also here in Casablanca in May of last year.

Our Council takes place during a period in which responding to violence in the post 11 September world and promoting peace and security are enormous and pressing challenges. Under the first main theme of the Council we are therefore focusing on how the International can best continue and strengthen its efforts to promote negotiated solutions to conflicts in the Middle East, the Great Lakes Region of Africa, Central and South Asia and Colombia.

For our second principle theme, under the heading 'From Monterrey to Johannesburg', we will be considering the critical tasks of improving world governance, ensuring sustainable development, promoting economic growth and supporting the New Partnership for Africa's Development, NEPAD.

Pursuing peace, security and sustainable development requires a truly determined North-South effort, an approach that is part of the history of the International that now, with member parties working on every continent, makes us better able to ensure progress toward a better future than anyone else. Much of our effort uniquely involves the bridging of people and regions based on solidarity and shared social democratic values. So it is fitting that the work of our Council takes place in Morocco, which - as a Mediterranean nation, an African nation and an Atlantic

nation - is itself a bridge, spanning culture, geography and people and moving forward with our comrades of the USFP.

## **OUR ACTIVITIES AROUND THE WORLD**

### **The Middle East**

Since our last Council in Santo Domingo, the Socialist International has continued to play an active part in efforts to achieve a just and lasting peace in the region. When circumstances have taken turns for the worse, we have responded in a number of concrete ways to ensure that the hopes of the people of the Middle East for an end to the violence and for peaceful coexistence are kept alive.

On 5 December, in response to the mounting toll against innocent civilians, the International condemned the surge in violence, stated that every effort had to be made 'to return to the path of dialogue' and reiterated that 'a lasting peace cannot be achieved without the establishment of a Palestinian state and security for Israel'.

As part of our continuing work to provide a forum in the region, especially during the most difficult periods when maintaining dialogue is crucial, the SI Middle East Committee held discussions in the region on 14-15 March. The Committee opened the two-day gathering in Ramallah, with the participation of Yasser Arafat, President of the Palestinian Authority and leader of Fatah. The meeting resumed the next day in Tel Aviv where Benjamin Ben-Eliezer, leader of the Israel Labour Party and Israel's Minister of Defence; Yossi Sarid, leader of Meretz; and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres addressed Committee members.

Thorbjørn Jagland, leader of the Norwegian Labour Party and Chair of the Committee, described as a victory that the Committee had been able to convene in Ramallah, and reiterated that from the 1970s, with the efforts of Willy Brandt and Bruno Kreisky, the work of the International has remained based on two principles: that security for Israel can be achieved only with independence and freedom for the Palestinians, while freedom for the Palestinians could not be attained without security for Israel.

On 2 April, following a sharp escalation of hostilities and civilian deaths, the International issued an 'Urgent Appeal for Peace in the Middle East' in which we stated that the situation had become 'untenable', that there was 'no alternative but for all sides to bring an immediate end' to what had become the worst outbreak of violence in the region for many years and called for 'the immediate withdrawal of Israeli Defence Forces from the occupied Palestinian cities'. In the Appeal we reiterated our profound

belief that the future of the two peoples 'can be based only on their peaceful coexistence, side by side, which makes it imperative for them both to take every step to end the conflict now, before more Israeli and Palestinian lives are needlessly lost'.

With the situation still critical, a special meeting of the SI Executive was held in Madrid on 23 April, hosted by the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party, PSOE. SI President António Guterres chaired the gathering, which included the participation of, along with members of the Executive, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and Hanni Al-Hassan, who represented Yasser Arafat. The meeting, closely followed by the media, concluded with five main points of agreement, including the holding of a regional peace conference with wide participation and the continued close cooperation between the Chair of SIMEC and the SI Israeli and Palestinian member parties to prepare a common plan for peace to be presented at our Council.

### **The Kurdish Question**

The International has also continued its work on matters affecting the Kurds. The SIMEC Working Group on the Kurdish Question met in Brussels on 22 February, hosted by the Belgian Socialist Party, PS, and chaired by Conny Fredriksson of the Swedish Social Democratic Party, SAP, and Chair of the Working Group. Participants discussed recent developments regarding the Kurdish people in Iran, Iraq and Turkey and reviewed a report from the SI mission to Northern Iraq, which took place last year and included members of the Working Group.

### **Asia and the Pacific**

The SI Asia-Pacific Committee met on 11-12 April in Manila to further the work of our International on peace and security in this complex and vital region, in line with the agenda of the Council. The second theme of the gathering, hosted by the Philippines Democratic Socialist Party, PDSP, was strengthening democratic development. In a statement agreed following detailed discussions, the Committee reiterated the International's longstanding belief that peace and security 'can be maintained only through democratic rule and good governance'.

The PDSP, a member of the government of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo and led by government secretary Norberto Gonzales, is playing a key role in promoting negotiated solutions to internal conflicts in the Philippines and in the inclusion of all elements of society into the country's democratic system. In her address to the meeting, President Macapagal Arroyo emphasised the long and sustained support of the Socialist International for democracy in the Philippines and the efforts of social

democrats for peace that is necessary 'to uplift the Filipino people and empower the communities'.

With regard to the pursuit of peace and security, the Committee underlined the importance of seeking greater dialogue and common ground between our social democratic parties and moderate Muslim groups in Asia and the Pacific. Our International will therefore be organising an SI delegation to Indonesia, where we have been carefully following the difficult period of transition, to strengthen ties with social democrats and other likeminded movements.

Delegates from throughout the region and beyond made presentations and provided insights into achieving peace in a number of places, including Central and South Asia, a critical area that is a focus of our Council. In its statement, the Committee urged increased solidarity with the elected government of our member Nepali Congress Party against the Maoist insurgency, and noted that the International would be sending an SI mission to the country as a concrete expression of support.

The Committee also expressed concern about the increasing violence in Kashmir and 'the potential negative effects in a region already experiencing heightened tension'. Following the meeting, the International has continued to monitor the situation and in a statement on 15 May condemned the devastating attack at an Indian army camp in Kashmir. The International said in the statement that those responsible seemed intent on worsening relations between India and Pakistan and urged both countries 'to find the common ground necessary to get a peace process for Kashmir on track'.

The Committee noted that there was renewed hope in Sri Lanka, where a ceasefire between the government and Tamil separatists was still in effect as the peace process mediated by Norway continued.

With regard to East Timor, the Committee expressed great satisfaction that it would soon be achieving independence as a democratic nation, as it did on 20 May. The extensive efforts of the International for peace and democracy in East Timor are well known, and our solidarity with the people of East Timor will continue as they now undertake the great challenges of institution building and economic revitalisation.

The Committee reiterated the longstanding support of our International for democracy and human rights in Burma. When Aung San Suu Kyi was subsequently freed from house arrest on 6 May, the International in a press release welcomed it as a positive step and called on the military regime to move ahead 'to a more significant phase', in the words of Aung San Suu Kyi herself, including the release of all political prisoners and the full restoration of political freedom for all Burmese people.

Prior to the meeting in Manila, I had the opportunity to be in Sydney to participate in meetings of the national executive of the Australian Labor Party, ALP, with the new ALP leader, Simon Crean, and with ALP members of parliament. The discussions centred on the efforts and initiatives being carried out by the ALP and its contributions to the work of the International.

### **Latin America and the Caribbean**

The work of the International for peace and democracy remains at the top of our agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean, where we continue to focus on a number of countries in the region, including Colombia, which is one of the points for discussion at our Council.

As part of our response to the difficult situation in Colombia, on 20 May the International held a special regional meeting in Bogotá to support the efforts of our SI member Liberal Party of Colombia, PLC, for a peaceful resolution to Colombia's internal conflict, and as a concrete expression of solidarity for the PLC on the eve of the 26 May presidential election. Horacio Serpa, leader of the PLC, which hosted the gathering, and the party's presidential candidate, welcomed representatives of SI member parties from South America, Central America and the Caribbean, and emphasised in his presentation that peace and democratic governance work to reinforce each other.

The meeting also counted on an opening address by Raúl Alfonsín, former President of Argentina and an SI Vice President, who underlined our firm belief in the preservation of liberty in the pursuit of equality. During the discussions that followed, participants reaffirmed that dialogue and negotiations are the only roads that can lead to peace, and addressed issues such as poverty and social degradation that are at the root of conflicts and require a multidimensional response. In this sense, the meeting concluded with a call for democratic forces of the left to work closer together in developing answers to the social and economic challenges of globalisation.

We also remain very concerned about conditions in Venezuela, especially following the events of April which showed the weakness of the country's democratic institutions. In early May I had the opportunity to travel to Caracas to reiterate the support of the International for SI member Democratic Action, AD, and Venezuelan civil society in their civic struggle in defence of democratic institutions and respect for human rights. I met with leaders of AD and representatives of other pro-democracy parties, as well as trade union leaders, non-governmental organisations and the media, and reiterated the position of our International that the 'deficit of democracy' in Venezuela must be overcome through inclusive dialogue.

I was able to be in Costa Rica on 3 February, to show the support of our International for the candidacy of Rolando Araya Monge, an SI Vice-President and leader of SI-member National Liberation Party, PLN, who received sufficient votes in the presidential election to advance to the runoff in April that was won by the candidate of the incumbent party. Following the runoff we were outraged to hear that Araya Monge and members of his family were brutally assaulted by a group of attackers. The International issued a declaration that condemned this cowardly act and expressed hope that those responsible would be brought to justice and 'that Costa Rica, with the example of leaders such as Rolando Araya Monge, remain a model of democracy and of full respect for the fundamental rights of its citizens'.

With regard to Haiti, the International in a statement on 12 December condemned the armed assault on the National Palace and the subsequent attacks by government supporters against opposition parties, journalists and leading members of the Democratic Convergence. In line with the resolution of our Council in Santo Domingo, the statement reiterated the full support of the International for the democratic struggle being carried out by the SI member parties in Haiti - the Party of the National Congress of Democratic Movements, KONAKOM, the Revolutionary Progressive Nationalist Party of Haiti, PANPRA, and the Organisation of the People in Struggle, OPL.

Continued monitoring of the situations in Haiti, Venezuela and Colombia, and the overall work of the International throughout the region to preserve and strengthen democracy and respect for human rights, will be part of our work at the next meeting of the SI Latin America and Caribbean Committee, SICLAC, which we are organising for 28-29 June in Caracas.

## **Africa**

As part of our expanding support for peace efforts in Africa, we carried out an extensive mission to the Great Lakes Region. Ousmane Tanor Dieng, Socialist Party of Senegal, PS, and Chair of the SI Africa Committee; Nanié-Coulibaly Safiatou, a member of the leadership of the Ivorian Popular Front, FPI; Steen Christensen, Social Democratic Party of Denmark, and I traveled to four different countries from 18 to 23 February. We began with preliminary discussions in Abidjan with President Laurent Gbagbo of Côte d'Ivoire, then moved on to the Democratic Republic of Congo for meetings in Kinshasa with members of the political opposition, civic organisations and representatives of the Congolese government. Among opposition leaders, Adrien Phongo Kunda, the Secretary General of the Union for Democracy and Social Progress, UDPS, said that the visit was well appreciated as it came during his country's worst crisis ever. Members of the mission and the political leaders we met agreed that

resolving the crisis in the region required continued support for the Inter-Congolese Dialogue and for the implementation of the Lusaka Agreement.

The next stop was the Burundian capital of Bujumbura where, in discussions with national leaders, the mission reiterated the International's support for the peace based on the August 2000 agreement signed in Arusha, Tanzania. Among others, the mission met with Jean Minani, the recently elected President of the transitional National Assembly established to bridge the country's ethnic divisions. Minani is the leader, with other senior members, of FRODEBU, one of Burundi's principal parties which has been sharing governmental responsibilities since November 2001 following the implementation of the agreement on a three-year transitional administration.

On the last leg of the mission we held meetings in Luanda with leaders of the ruling Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola, MPLA, an observer member of the SI, including João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, Secretary General, and Paulo Teixeira Jorge, International Secretary. The mission reiterated the backing of our International for dialogue and national reconciliation, for the alleviation of the suffering of those affected by the conflict and for the preparations for national elections.

The situation in Angola and the International's work throughout the continent on issues including peace and poverty alleviation will be on the agenda when the SI Africa Committee holds its next meeting on 5-6 July in Luanda, hosted by the MPLA.

We have also been closely following the situation in Equatorial Guinea. The latest wave of repression against opposition groups, including SI member Convergence for Social Democracy, CPDS, has led to questionable charges, including sedition, against more than 140 individuals, among them Plácido Micó, CPDS Secretary General, who was placed under house arrest. Amid denunciations that many of the accused have been tortured and as the trials began last week, we have been in contact with the CPDS, including Celestino-Bonifacio Bacalé Obiang, who was recently elected as the party's presidential candidate for the forthcoming elections. We are particularly concerned that the government in Equatorial Guinea is using the clampdown to target the CPDS as one of the few opposition parties still operating in spite of the authorities' harassment, and are sending legal counsel to monitor the trials as an expression of our solidarity.

Prior to the Great Lakes mission, I had the honour of being in South Africa for the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our SI member African National Congress, ANC, on 8 January. The main celebration was held at the Absa Stadium in Durban, where South African President Thabo Mbeki and other ANC figures joined tens of thousands of people in celebrating the continuing growth of a movement that for so long has stood for the liberation of South



Africa and for the freedom and human dignity of all Africans. In his address President Mbeki, leader of the ANC, stated that, 'From its birth, the ANC has been internationalist in character' and emphasised the importance of NEPAD for the future of Africa and the Johannesburg Summit for the future of the world, two of the key points on the agenda of our Council.

### **Central and Eastern Europe**

On 21 April I had the honour of being in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia for the Unification Congress in which the Social Democratic Union, SDU, and the Social Democracy Party joined together to form the Social Democratic Party, SDP. SDU leader Zarko Korac stated at the Congress, held in Belgrade, that the unification 'is an expression of the wish for social democracy to become a strong factor on the Serbian political scene'.

The combining of the two parties, both members of the ruling coalition, meant that the SDP then became the third largest party in the Serbian parliament. During the event, both Korac and Social Democracy Party leader Slobodan Orlic emphasised that the parties had been in the forefront of the struggle for democracy and human rights throughout the previous decade. Both parties have participated as guests at a number of SI gatherings and Korac and Orlic headed their party delegations to the meeting of the SI Committee on Central and Eastern Europe, SICEE, held in Belgrade in September 2001.

We are currently planning the next meeting of SICEE, which will be held in Ljubljana, Slovenia on 12-13 July. We are also organising a special SI meeting with Central and Eastern European and Central Asian parties to address security issues in the post 11 September era that will be held in Moscow on 26-27 September, chaired by SI Vice President Gyula Horn as agreed by the SI Presidium.

In Hungary on 21 April, the same day as the Unification Congress in Belgrade, the Hungarian Socialist Party, MSzP, returned to power by winning, in coalition with the smaller Alliance of Free Democrats, the second round of voting following the 7 April election in which the MSzP came first. I had the opportunity to be in Budapest for the opening of the MSzP's very successful campaign. The new government, headed by Prime Minister Peter Medgyessy, took office this week ready to implement a new social and economic program to reduce poverty and stimulate job creation.

## **THE WORK OF THE INTERNATIONAL ON GLOBAL ISSUES**

### **Peace, Democracy and Human Rights**

The Committee on Peace, Democracy and Human Rights continued its work at the meeting we organised on 24-25 January in Geneva, at the Palais des Nations, United Nations, under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Milos Zeman of the Czech Social Democratic Party, CSSD. The main theme of the gathering was 'Conflict prevention and conflict resolution' and participants assessed the current status of regional conflicts around the world and considered the complex causes and the nature of conflicts in today's changing world.

The Committee agreed criteria to recommend initiatives for the further work of our International in support of peace and emphasised the importance of strengthening the mechanisms for preventive diplomacy. It focused in particular on the need for enhanced efforts on behalf of social democratic forces confronting conflict, political violence and other threats to democracy.

In this regard, a number of concrete initiatives were decided by the Committee to deepen the International's work on conflict resolution and our solidarity with member parties in difficult situations, specifically the sending of SI missions to Belarus, Nepal and Indonesia.

The first of these was carried out on 17-19 April when an SI mission traveled to Minsk. The members of the mission were Prime Minister Zeman, Urban Ahlin, Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the Swedish Parliament (Social Democratic Party, SAP) and myself.

The mission strengthened ties with social democratic and other pro-democracy forces in Belarus, underlined the support of the International for their efforts and was able to learn of recent developments and prospects for change under the current authoritarian rule. Meetings were held with leaders of the SI-member Belarusian Social Democratic Party (Narodnaya Hramada), BSDP (NH), the Consultative Council of opposition political parties, leaders of trade union organisations, members of analytical and research centres, representatives of non-governmental organisations, editors-in-chief of Belarusian media and journalists.

### **Economy, Social Cohesion and the Environment**

Continuing with the efforts of our International to promote sustainable development and social justice in this time of globalisation, the SI Committee on the Economy, Social Cohesion and the Environment gathered at the headquarters of the United Nations in New York on 15-16

February 2002. Christoph Zöpel of the Social Democratic Party, SPD, of Germany and Chair of the Committee chaired the meeting.

Committee members discussed the position of the Socialist International regarding the International Conference on Financing for Development that was held in March in Monterrey, Mexico, and on the upcoming World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. In line with our long held views, the Committee issued a statement on the Monterrey Conference in which it advocated, among other points, a greater and leading role for international organisations, particularly the United Nations, in ensuring more equitable development, and stronger participation of the developing countries in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and international financial institutions.

With regard to the Johannesburg Summit, the Committee agreed a number of 'points for discussion', including the fundamental relationship between peace, security, social justice and solidarity. Also emphasised was the link between sustainable development and good governance based on the greater involvement of parliaments, trade unions, industry and civic society overall in the policy process. The Committee will convene again on the eve of our Council to prepare a draft resolution based on these points for our consideration.

The Socialist International has always been actively involved in working to move the world forward on development issues, and our efforts and ideas, many developed under the guidance of Willy Brandt and Michael Manley, were at the fore during the Rio Conference in 1992 and subsequent global gatherings on various aspects of global sustainability including the Population Conference in Cairo in 1994, the Social Summit in Copenhagen in 1995, the Women's Conference in Beijing 1996, the Human Settlements Conference in Istanbul 1996, the UN Millennium Assembly in 2000 and the Monterrey Conference earlier this year. Many gains have been made along the way and social democracy has played a substantial role in achieving them. Nonetheless, and as the Johannesburg Summit approaches, much more needs to be done, as will be discussed in our Council.

### **Local Authorities**

The III Socialist International World Conference of Mayors held on 7-9 December in Athens unanimously adopted the 'Charter for Cities Governed by Socialists', the culmination of years of effort and coordinated SI activities involving mayors and local authority representatives from social democratic, socialist and labour parties around the globe. Much of the previous work toward the preparation of the Charter, in fact, was carried out at our II World Conference of Mayors held here in Morocco, in the city of Fez, in 1998.

The Conference in Athens was hosted by the Panhellenic Socialist Movement, PASOK, and was chaired by Hermes Binner, Chair of the SI Committee on Local Authorities and Mayor of Rosario (PSP, Argentina). Among those who made opening addresses were Prime Minister Costas Simitis, Leader of PASOK and a Vice-President of the International, Pierre Mauroy, President of the *Communauté urbaine* of Lille and an SI Honorary President, and Paraskevas Avgerinos, International Secretary of PASOK.

The gathering began with a plenary session on the first day, which included contributions from mayors of cities from around the world. Working groups were formed on the second day to review the main elements of the final draft of the Charter, which was then approved on the third and final day following reports from the working groups and a last round of discussion.

Also on the final day, delegates were also addressed by Dimitris Avramopoulos, the Mayor of Athens, while special messages were conveyed by the President of the Municipal Council of Quelimane, Pio Augusto Matos (Frelimo, Mozambique); the Mayor of Mégrine, Néziha Mezhou, (RCD, Tunisia); and, the Mayor of Bunepa, Surendra Bahadur Bade Shrestha (NCP, Nepal).

The Charter is a profoundly social democratic document that underlines the increasing importance of the world's cities and towns in 'rebuilding a sense of citizenship and planting the seeds of a fairer society characterised by greater solidarity'. In addition to identifying the city as the 'leading actor and decision-making centre in the 21<sup>st</sup> century', the Charter provides detailed assessments of local government as a promoter of inclusion and integration, and as a critical force for sustainable development and resource management. In this way, the Charter is also part of our International's overall contribution to the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg.

Following approval of the Charter, the mayors participating in the Conference issued a declaration welcoming the resumption of dialogue between the two communities on Cyprus under the auspices of the United Nations, and expressing hopes for a just and viable solution to the Cyprus issue.

## **SOCIAL DEMOCRACY IN AN UNEASY WORLD**

The world is going through a difficult period and events are moving swiftly. Globalisation has meant marginalisation for too many people, particularly women and children, still more are threatened by violence and renewed

threats of war, and increasing numbers are migrating, driven from their homes by insecurity and the quest for survival.

There are those who come with promises of easy answers, exploiting people's fears for short-term political gain. But they offer only dangerous mirages, for there are no easy answers in our uneasy world.

We in the Socialist International know this from long experience, in the struggle for peace - promoting disarmament throughout the most contentious periods of the Cold War and today as we make every effort to find resolutions to regional conflicts - in the fight for democracy and respect for human rights, and in our work to achieve sustainable economic development and opportunity for all.

The International stands apart because of our belief in finding lasting solutions to real problems through determined political action. Revitalising politics is therefore a principal task for our movement today, to inspire and to involve the greatest numbers of people in the decisions that affect their lives. In this way, by putting the humanity back into politics, we keep our family growing and moving forward as we respond to the challenges of today.