

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF THE SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL  
(OSLO, NORWAY, 18-19 MAY 1998)

MAIN THEME: GLOBAL SOLIDARITY

The Council meeting of the Socialist International in Oslo is dedicated to a coordinated approach to today's challenges based upon solidarity between nations and among peoples. Globalisation has opened new horizons and holds great potential, but the market forces and new technologies which propel it are blind to social injustice and economic inequality and deaf to the aspirations of the majority of the world's population who are being left behind. Global change must therefore be shaped so that all will have the opportunity to benefit. This task requires the joint efforts of people, political parties and governments everywhere, guided by a belief in a common humanity and in cooperation within a framework of global solidarity.

Humanising global change and ensuring that people come first in the new world which is emerging means continued and determined action on three interconnected fronts - the political, the humanitarian and the economic.

The political dimension involves strengthening democracy and defending human rights. Progress has been made in the area of democratisation, but holding free and fair elections is only the first step in a process which must be continually fostered - including within the oldest democracies - so that people at all levels of society have a constant voice in the debates and decisions by which they are governed. For democracy to be sustained, citizens must be able to hold governments accountable within a well functioning rule of law and through institutions and channels which facilitate more direct popular participation. At the same time, too many countries still suffer under authoritarian rule of one type or another and the democratic forces who struggle for peaceful transition within them must be able to rely on unswerving international support.

In this the year of the fiftieth anniversary of the UN Universal Declaration on Human Rights, we reaffirm that human rights - political, civil, economic, social and cultural - are universal and indivisible. Rights-based initiatives, with heightened emphasis on economic, social and cultural rights, are an integral component of social democracy's response to globalisation. Respect for political rights and civil liberties is necessary to ensure the protection of all other rights. For example, the right of workers to organise and form unions is essential for the defence of their economic rights. Human rights must therefore be promoted in a coordinated manner and incorporated into other activities such as development cooperation, peace-keeping and other forms of conflict-settlement.

The humanitarian dimension entails providing timely and sustained support for those who are the victims of oppression and strife, and

promoting initiatives for the prevention and peaceful resolution of violent situations. Greater efforts, stronger mechanisms and more rapid responses are needed to enforce the Geneva Conventions and other pertinent international laws during armed conflicts. New and more effective international structures for humanitarian initiatives and for holding accountable those responsible for inflicting casualties on civilians must be created.

More attention and greater priority must be given to preventive measures in order to identify and address potentially volatile situations before violence breaks out. The United Nations remains the most important body for peace and security cooperation, but the complementary role of regional organisations has proven to be effective and should be strengthened. Education for peace, confidence-building measures, the promotion of dialogue and disarmament initiatives in both the nuclear and conventional categories must be intensified.

The economic dimension includes a war on poverty, and investment in people, the world's most valuable resource. High unemployment, underemployment and social exclusion constitute a severe threat to democracy everywhere and are the result of a form of globalisation which places economic interests ahead of social responsibility and is therefore ultimately unsustainable. A political and ethical framework based on inclusion and democratising economic change must be developed to reverse the widening gap between rich and poor - both within and between nations.

Such a framework would provide for greater investment in human capital, particularly in the fields of education, technical training and health, based on enhanced cooperation between developed and developing countries. Only through a global development partnership will poor people and poor countries have a chance to realise their potential and make their way in an interdependent world.

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Progress on these three fronts requires a concerted international effort. The Socialist International now numbers 139 member parties which come from every continent and it has regional and thematic committees which are actively working throughout the world. Guided by our long-held values of liberty, justice and equality, and united in global solidarity, we remain committed to the tasks at hand and hopeful that yet more people will join in the effort.

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