

26 May 1998



DECLARATIONS AND RESOLUTIONS OF THE SI COUNCIL
MEETING

Oslo, Norway, 18-19 May 1998

Dear Comrade,

I am pleased to send you herewith the declarations and resolutions adopted by the Council at its meeting in Oslo, Norway, on 18-19 May 1998.

The Council adopted a declaration on the main theme of its discussions, "Global Solidarity", and resolutions on the Middle East, Central and Eastern Europe, Security and Stability in the South Caucasian States, Malaysia, Nuclear tests in India, Indonesia, Burma, Algeria, Cameroon, Western Sahara, and on Chiapas, Mexico. The Council also endorsed a statement on Women and Power-Sharing: Leadership and Strategies, agreed by SI Women.

The list of participants at the meeting is also enclosed.

Yours fraternally,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Luis Ayala', with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Luis Ayala
Secretary General

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DECLARATION ON THE MAIN THEME

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.

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.

RESOLUTION ON THE MIDDLE EAST

The Council of the Socialist International, meeting in Oslo on 18/19 May 1998, having considered the very serious conditions prevailing in the Middle East as a result of the deadlock in the peace process:

Expresses its deep concern over the lack of progress in all tracks of the peace process, which can lead to an escalation of further violence;

Confirms its strong conviction that the peace process must base itself on the principles and the foundation of international legitimacy as embodied in UN Security Council resolutions 242, 338 and 425, as well as the principles stated on the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference and in the Oslo Accords, foremost among which is the principle of Land for Peace;

Reaffirms that these principles and agreements, aiming at a permanent and stable peace, provide for Israeli withdrawal from Palestinian and other occupied Arab territories, allowing the Palestinians to practise their inalienable right to self-determination and the setting-up of an independent Palestinian state, as well as the principle of respect for the right of all the peoples in the region to live in peace and security and channel their efforts to national construction and development;

Supports the present efforts by the USA, EU, Egypt, Norway and others to assist the parties in implementing their commitments, including re-deployment, the release of prisoners, the safe passage between Gaza and the West Bank, the operation of Gaza Airport and the construction of Gaza Port, in accordance with the Oslo Accords, so that final status negotiations can be entered upon to resolve problems concerning Jerusalem, the settlements, refugees and borders;

Reiterates that Israel has a special responsibility to bring the peace process back on track and calls upon the Israeli government to desist from unilateral practices, particularly those of collective punishment, which undermine mutual confidence, and to bring the settlement policies that aim at establishing a de facto situation in the occupied territories, to an immediate close;

Condemns terrorism, the killing of civilians, men, women and children, in the strongest possible terms. The Palestinian Authority must spare no effort to destroy terrorism and isolate the terrorists. It is also the obligation of the Israeli government to put an end to extremist activities. It is not only human lives that are at stake, but the peace process itself;

Underlines the importance of granting aid to the Palestinian Authority and of extending every kind of assistance to the Palestinian people in order to improve their living conditions;

Calls on Israel and Syria to resume negotiations on the Syrian track on the basis of UN Resolutions and the Terms of Reference of the Madrid Conference. UN Resolution 425 on the Lebanese track should also be implemented.

Reiterates that the European Union, in a continent neighbouring the Middle East - with its political potential and current economic support - should play an increased role in the search for peace.

Reasserts its conviction that no real and lasting peace in the region will be established without the Kurdish issue being taken into account. It is therefore necessary for the international community to focus on this issue and to put pressure on the governments concerned to start profound democratic reforms and to favour political, negotiated, peaceful and fair solutions guaranteeing the legitimate rights of the Kurds within the borders of each country concerned.

From Oslo, the cradle of the first Oslo Accord and Declaration of Principles, the Council of the Socialist International appeals to the international community and all peace-loving forces to invigorate and consolidate their efforts in pursuit of a lasting peace in the Middle East.

RESOLUTION ON CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

Original: French

1. Central, eastern and south-eastern Europe finds itself today at a crucial turning-point. On the one hand, the launch of the process of enlargement of the European Union (EU) and NATO accelerates the completion of the transition in countries of central Europe. On the other hand, the difficulties encountered in the peace process in Bosnia and the crisis in Kosovo show that risks to stability and security still exist. It is therefore up to all the democratic forces, and in the first place those of social democratic inspiration, to work towards implementing security and stability throughout the region as a condition for creating societies which are free, democratic, pluralistic, multi-ethnic and just.
2. Carrying out the Dayton Accords must continue to be a priority for the international community. The outcome of the recent elections and the formation of the Dodik government have opened up a new phase in the Republika Srpska. At the same time, we also witness the consolidation of stability in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. There are therefore greater possibilities to overcome the obstacles which still hinder the full application of the Dayton Accords. We appreciate and back all the efforts made by the UN High Representative Carlos Westendorp, and we believe that all useful actions must be pursued in order to proceed with:
 - the return of refugees, as a condition which cannot be given up, in order to rebuild multi-ethnic Bosnia and re-establish the trust broken by war and ethnic cleansing;
 - the strengthening of the common institutions of Bosnia-Herzegovina;
 - economic reconstruction, by re-confirming the aid and commitments of the international community in the Donor Conference on 7-8 May;
 - the activity of the International Tribunal in The Hague, obtaining full and sincere cooperation from all states;
 - the support for multi-ethnic parties, especially in the context of the September elections;
 - the intensification of all forms of multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious relations, based on equal opportunities for men and women in all domains of society.

The spirit of the Dayton Accords also requires that the integration of Eastern Slavonia within Croatia be carried out with full respect for the identity and rights of the Serb populations of those regions. The right of the Serbs, citizens of the Republic of Croatia, to return to their cities and places of origin should be assisted.

The presence of NATO peace-keeping troops in Bosnia has shown itself to be indispensable in order to stop the war and to consolidate peace. These tasks are not over and it is therefore essential for SFOR to remain in Bosnia, renewing its mandate, which will expire in June 1998. The current Train and Equip programmes, coordinated by NATO in Bosnia and Herzegovina should be directed towards their inclusion in the partnership for peace.

In order to secure a lasting peace, the inclusion of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Council of Europe and the opening of negotiations on a Cooperation Agreement with the EU should be encouraged.

The parliamentary elections of September 1998 will represent a crucial step in consolidating the peace process and strengthening the institutions of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The international community must therefore feel committed to backing the OSCE in the preparation of these elections, and in efforts to develop new electoral laws which would strengthen multi-ethnicity and democracy. As parties of the Socialist International, we wish to express all our support to the SD BiH and the SDP BiH and to the other forces of progressive inspiration in each entity and we hope that the elections will be the opportunity for establishing ever closer relations between all the parties which are fighting for a Bosnia which is united, independent, free, democratic and multi-ethnic.

3. We express our gravest concern over the developments in Kosovo and we condemn any instances of abuse of power or violence which have taken place during these weeks.

We are aware that the Kosovo crisis could produce explosions throughout the region.

As the Contact Group and the EU have indicated, it is absolutely essential that the Belgrade authorities and the representatives of the Albanian community in Kosovo initiate a dialogue without preconditions. It is therefore our hope that the representative of the OSCE, Felipe González, can begin his activities, as his actions could favour the opening of a dialogue and then accompany its evolution.

We welcome the first meeting between president Milosevic and Ibrahim Rugova and hope that the dialogue will continue.

The agreement on the start of a new school year for Albanian students in the schooling system, signed thanks to the assistance given by the community of S. Egidio, shows that a dialogue can be implemented. Engaging in a true and sincere dialogue would also enable the FRY to begin its re-integration into international institutions.

We also wish that the elections in Montenegro may strengthen the democratic political forces which are struggling for political and economic reforms.

The start of a dialogue in Kosovo could also have a positive impact on the process of reaching a just solution to the minority problems throughout the region. The Socialist International will send a mission to the region to help overcome the tensions and contribute to the search for political solutions.

4. Ensuring stability in the Balkans requires continued assistance to Albania in its return to a condition of political and economic normality. We appreciate the efforts made by the Albanian Government and we appeal to all the political forces, both in government and in opposition, to take positions which are consistent with the actual strengthening of democracy in Albania.

Guaranteeing stability in FYROM is of no less importance, a country where the governing coalition also includes the main Albanian party. The Unpredep mission has played an important role, and with the termination of its mandate there is the need to guarantee, in any event, an international presence which will ensure the same goals of maintaining peace and stability.

5. The launch of the enlargement process of the European Union is a crucial step of enormous value and significance for the entire continent. After centuries of wars, division and conflicts, for the first time in its history Europe has the chance to unify based on pacific means and on the consensus of its nations and its peoples. We welcome the steps made by the countries of central Europe towards the stabilisation and modernisation of their economies, and the development of democratic institutions and human and social rights, as preconditions for the start of negotiations. We welcome with satisfaction the start of negotiations with Estonia, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovenia and Hungary, and we are committed to supporting their integration. We also hope that Bulgaria, Lithuania, Latvia, Romania and Slovakia will be able to start their negotiations in the near future.

In any event, it is the very objective of stability and peace which lies behind the enlargement of the EU which requires a cohesion and solidarity among all the candidate countries in central Europe. The

instruments set forth in the European Council in Luxembourg - the European Conference, the Forum of 15 + 11, the Accession Partnerships for each candidate - should aim at avoiding feelings of frustration or isolation in any given country. To the contrary, they should guarantee that all candidates, whatever their timing for accession, all feel part of the process of enlargement.

We are convinced that anchoring Turkey strongly to Europe would favour the strengthening of democracy in that country, and would also favour greater stability in the Balkans and in the Caucasian and Eurasian regions.

We welcome, too, the start of negotiations for Cyprus to join the EU and we hope that the prospect of this will allow the solution of the political problem on the island in accordance with the decisions of the United Nations.

6. NATO enlargement must ensure greater stability and security. For this reason, while we welcome the integration of Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic, we reaffirm the need for the Atlantic Alliance to keep its doors open to other countries which share the values and objectives of a new European security. At the same time, NATO must continue to exercise its role and function as a stabilising factor, both by reinforcing the instruments of cooperation - the Partnership for Peace, and Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council - and by guaranteeing peace through its presence where, as in Bosnia, it remains threatened with the risk of bloody conflict.

The Baltic Security Charter, recently signed by the Baltic countries with the United States, represents a contribution to stability and to the definition of a new European security architecture.

7. This new security architecture requires that all the continental and regional forms of cooperation be reinforced.

The OSCE is asked to play a crucial role in conflict-prevention, in favouring consensual solutions and in aiding in the post-conflict peace-building process.

It is therefore useful to strengthen the OSCE's activities and missions.

Regional cooperation institutions - such as the Central European Initiative, the Baltic Sea Cooperation Council, the Black Sea Council and the South Eastern Cooperation Initiative - can all be important instruments in increasing cooperation and interdependence among neighbouring countries and in affirming the idea of a "common future" to be built together.

8. The prospects for Russia's political and economic evolution are crucial for the future of Europe. The last year has seen an economic development which is more solid and positive than in the past, although strong social inequalities and territorial imbalances continue to persist. On a political level as well, we have witnessed a consolidation of the democratic institutions, albeit with a continued weakness of the political parties. This process is not however near completion. It is therefore necessary that the international community, starting with the EU, confirm the commitments it has taken with regard to Russia and continue carrying out a full cooperation in all areas.
9. The transition in Ukraine continues to be very difficult. The recent electoral results, together with the economic difficulties, risk further blocking the indispensable economic and political reforms. We express our preoccupation with the conflict which has arisen, following the elections, between the government authorities and a number of representatives of the opposition who are mayors of large cities. This is precisely why it is necessary that the international community manifest its active commitment in favouring and backing those forces which want to continue on the road of democracy.

As we defend the principles of democracy and human rights we support dialogue between the different political forces in Belarus as the only way out of the present situation.

The situation in the Caucasus, where there are unresolved ethnic and cross-border tensions, also continues to be cause for concern. The conflicts require political solutions based on consensus and on a recognition of the territorial integrity of each state. All forms of terrorism and violence must be refused. A political initiative, starting with the OSCE, is urgent in order to promote negotiations between the parties concerned.

10. The events in eastern Europe have shown the need for the presence and action of the parties of social democratic inspiration. Since 1989, social democratic parties have been or are in government in 12 countries of the region. It is all the more significant that it is precisely these countries which have completed their transition with the most remarkable results.

The Socialist International, which today has 26 member parties in 20 countries throughout the region, considers the area's stability and security as a strategic priority, and intends to take all the necessary actions aimed at ensuring peace and prosperity in every country in the region.

RESOLUTION ON SECURITY AND STABILITY
IN THE SOUTH CAUCASIAN STATES

1. The Socialist International supports the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. The SI, together with its member parties, considers the diversity of the region as an asset and strongly encourages the states to support the democratic development of cross-border cultural and national heritages. Simultaneously, a satisfying status for Nagorny-Karabakh has to be found.
2. The Socialist International acknowledges the successful implementation of political and economic reforms in Southern Caucasus. Through acceptance of multi-party systems, democratic election procedures and freedom of expression, these countries have taken concrete steps towards democracy. The further improvement of the human rights situation, combatting corruption and the development of independent media in all three South Caucasian states can intensify the democratisation process and help safeguard the results achieved. In this context, it is also important to intensify the restructuring of the social security system in order to find a social balance for the hardships of the transition. The SI member parties will offer their cooperation to ensure the continuation of these processes.
3. Cultural ties between South Caucasian and the other European countries provide an important basis for cooperation in the development of a clear division of power, an independent judicial process, a democratic rule of law and transparent institutions. The strengthening of democratic institutions and increased public confidence in these very institutions are essential components to non-violent regulation of conflicts, both internal and external. SI members are prepared to share their experiences in the attempt to find a solution to these democratic objectives.
4. The SI supports every effort aimed at peacefully solving conflicts within and between the individual states. It also calls on the conflicting parties to increasingly resolve hostilities through mediated procedures with the UN and the OSCE and others. The previous activities of these two organisations deserve our high recognition.
5. The responsible conflicting parties in the South Caucasian states are requested to increase their efforts in providing for the unconditional return of displaced persons and refugees and for their integration into their respective communities. International organisations and SI members should offer increased cooperation and support in this area.

6. It is urgent that the quality of life be improved, especially for refugees and displaced persons. Such an improvement is not only a humanitarian interest, but is also in the immediate interest of political and social stability. Furthermore, the improvement of the quality of life can be installed even without resolving the status question.
7. We have to find satisfying conditions for ethnic minorities, guaranteeing them a secure existence. Europeans, in cooperation with their respective governments, should also be prepared to contribute to the regulation of the minority issue.
8. The "Minsk Process" initiated by the OSCE reinforces the willingness of OSCE members to take on a part of the responsibility for the regulation of the Nagorny-Karabakh conflict. The SI welcomes this European engagement and commits itself to an acceleration and intensification of the negotiation process. However, the major part of responsibility lies in the hands of the conflicting parties themselves. The SI calls on the conflicting parties to find mutually acceptable solutions to the conflict through direct negotiations, and to transform the four-year-old ceasefire into a lasting peace.
9. The SI welcomes the progress made in improving the situation in the Georgian-Ossetian conflict.
10. The SI welcomes the peaceful direct and informal dialogue between Georgian and Abkhazian parties. However, differences of opinion must not escalate to violence. In this spirit, the SI supports the "Geneva Process" which gives the framework for confidence-building measures and, therefore, helps facilitate a consensus on the status issue. The SI calls for the elimination of the results of ethnic cleansing. Remedies for gross violations of human rights should be provided as an essential part of a solution to the refugee problem and for the re-establishment of genuine peace.
11. One of the main threats to security and stability in the South Caucasus originates from different forms of violence, mainly terrorism and covert actions. The SI stands firmly against the use of violence as a means to achieving political results and calls on governments to cooperate in order to prevent terrorist actions against their neighbours. At the same time, it is urgent for the governments of the region and the international community to prevent the spread of arms in the conflict zones.
12. The SI expresses its concern that the unregulated conflict in the South Caucasian region, together with the tensions in the Northern Caucasus, could turn the entire Caucasian region into a zone of instability which could endanger peace, security and cooperation in the European and Asiatic continents. The SI is prepared to cooperate with the states of the Southern Caucasus and the Russian Federation in order to prevent this

from happening. A regular exchange of information and consultation between and among concerned parties in potential and existing conflict areas and with the Socialist International Peace, Security and Disarmament Committee, SIPSAD, could be an important tool of preventive diplomacy and elaboration of early warning mechanisms for conflict-prevention.

13. The SI supports the wish of the South Caucasian states to find their place in the world's - and especially in the European - integration processes, and their commitment to the common human values. Such projects as the European transportation corridor and also the common use of natural resources of the region, could be important instruments for achieving stronger ties with Europe and sustainable development, peace and social justice.
14. The SI is convinced that nations of the region can only succeed through peaceful cooperation. We embrace the current initiatives adopted and encourage all governments involved to continue down this path. Regional cooperation on all levels has the potential to relieve tensions. In the framework of today's globalised world, where individual states are no longer capable of independently resolving problems, regional cooperation also has the potential to resolve economic, ecological and security objectives.
15. The SI encourages the institutionalisation of this cooperation, especially in the fields of protection of human, civic and minority rights as well as economic development such as energy, transport and customs regulations, and arms control and its verification. Such efforts for institutionalised cooperation might prove helpful to decreasing the intensity of existing conflicts and increasing the confidence necessary to make progress in solving them.

RESOLUTION ON MALAYSIA

The Council of the Socialist International, meeting in Oslo, notes with grave concern the recent decision of the Court of Appeal in Malaysia to sentence to three years' imprisonment Lim Guan Eng, an elected Member of Parliament and Deputy Secretary General of the Democratic Action Party of Malaysia, a member party of the Socialist International.

Lim Guan Eng was charged under the Sedition Act and the Printing Presses and Publications Act for having printed a pamphlet which reflected public disquiet over the Malaysian Government's handling of a statutory rape case involving a former government minister and the apparent denial of the rights of the victim, a young woman. As has happened before, efforts by opposition politicians in Malaysia to carry out their duty to question government actions are being seriously eroded by the use of restrictive legislation in an arbitrary and selective manner, and once again the rights of women in Malaysia have been undermined.

The Socialist International believes the case against Lim Guan Eng reflects a desire not only to detain and silence a prominent critic, removing him from public life, but also to deter others from the free expression of dissent. It therefore strongly urges that the conviction of Lim Guan Eng be overturned, that his political rights be fully respected and that he be free to carry out his responsibilities as a Member of Parliament. It also calls upon the Malaysian Government to halt the victimisation of women and fully guarantee that women's rights are respected in law and in practice.

RESOLUTION ON NUCLEAR TESTS IN INDIA

The Socialist International condemns the nuclear tests which were carried out by India. These tests have serious implications for regional and global security and constitute a strong setback for international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation efforts.

Recalling India's previous long-time engagement in the struggle for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, we call upon India to adhere unconditionally to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). We also call upon Pakistan to exercise maximum restraint.

The SI recalls that the nuclear-weapon states have undertaken, at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, to pursue with determination systematic and progressive efforts to reduce nuclear weapons globally, with the ultimate goal of eliminating these weapons.

The nuclear-weapons states should now take their arsenals off alert and remove nuclear warheads from their delivery vehicles. It is simply not acceptable that some states keep subjecting the international community to the continuous dangers of a possible nuclear weapon launch by mistake.

RESOLUTION ON INDONESIA

Original: Spanish

Considering the situation of profound political, economic and moral crisis prevailing in Indonesia, which has caused hundreds of deaths in recent days;

Considering that, in the days to come, mass demonstrations are anticipated throughout the country as a means of pressure to achieve democratic reforms;

Considering the unwillingness of General Suharto's regime to implement such reforms;

The Socialist International calls on the Indonesian authorities to refrain from committing acts of violence against their own people.

In keeping with its principle of actively seeking democracy and peace, the Socialist International expresses its political determination to see a democratic political system established in Indonesia which would allow society to extricate itself from the impasse into which it has been pushed by a dictatorial and nepotistic regime.

At the same time the Socialist International reaffirms its wish to see the situation in East Timor resolved in accordance with international law, by means of the free exercise by the people of East Timor of their right to self-determination.

RESOLUTION ON BURMA

The Council of the Socialist International, meeting in Oslo on 18-19 May 1998:

Expresses grave concern at the continued massive violation of human rights, the total denial of basic freedoms and the deepening repressive measures perpetrated by the SLORC/SPDC military regime in Burma;

In particular, *condemns* the recent attacks on the Karen refugee camps by the DKBA armed groups controlled by the regime, and the extra-judicial killings of 42 Shan ethnic people and the violation of other human rights during the past 13 months in the Shan state by troops belonging to the military Junta;

Notes with deep concern the illegal heavy sentencing given to the democracy activists through unlawful trials conducted by the military authorities before their illegal Kangaroo tribunals and courts;

Welcomes the recent United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), and UNHRC consensus resolutions on Burma;

Notes with great relief the agreement reached last week between the UNHRC and the Thai government stipulating the condition of transparency in the protection of the Burmese refugees in Thailand by the Thai government;

Warmly welcomes the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan's endeavour using his good offices in meeting the Head of the Junta, General Than Shwe, on 17 December 1997, urging him to implement the UNGA resolutions passed consecutively for six years;

Appeals to the UN Secretary General to continue bringing pressure to bear on the military Junta by using his good offices until they make significant advances towards the democratisation of Burma;

Deplores the cynical contempt shown by the Junta for the basic human rights of the Burmese people and for the calls made by the international community to improve its human rights record;

Wholeheartedly calls on the international community to stop the overseas development assistance and to impose trade, tourism, diplomatic and moral sanctions on the military regime until there is genuine progress in democratisation and improvement in the human rights situation in Burma;

Strongly urges the military government in Burma to immediately initiate a substantive tripartite dialogue with the democratic forces led

by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and ethnic leaders before it is too late to prevent another violent social and political upheaval in Burma, and

Urges the Junta to release all political prisoners and stop all unlawful arrests and illegal sentencings.

RESOLUTION ON ALGERIA

Original: French

The Socialist International, in the face of continuing violence and human rights violations in Algeria, and the attacks on fundamental individual and collective liberties:

Reaffirms:

- the urgency to find a political, peaceful and democratic solution to the tragedy in that country;
- the need to start a peace process based on dialogue between all those who categorically condemn and reject violence and terrorism;
- its solidarity and support for its member party, the Socialist Forces Front, FFS.

Supports:

- the concrete initiatives taken by NGOs charged with the protection of human rights, with respect to information and transparency concerning the situation of human rights, in order to determine responsibilities;
- similar initiatives taken by the UN;
- the initiative taken by women's NGOs to promote and protect the rights of women in Algeria and provide equal opportunities for women and men in all domains of society.

Urges its member parties:

- to address public opinion and the media to ensure objective and complete information about the situation in Algeria and to give support to all political forces committed to peace and democracy in Algeria;
 - to urge their governments to strengthen mediation efforts aimed at achieving peace and a political solution which would unite all forces which reject violence and terrorism.
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RESOLUTION ON CAMEROON

Original: French

The Council of the Socialist International represents, by definition, a focal point of global solidarity which is the concern of all.

Social justice and equal opportunities form part of the essential values upheld by every member of the Socialist International.

Democracy is the most viable way of expressing such values, and democracy cannot subsist without a democratic system governed by clear and equitable laws which respect majority rule.

The respect for such a majority also presupposes respect for individual liberties, human rights and the uprooting of institutionalised corruption.

As this balance has been disrupted in Africa, particularly in Cameroon, the Council of the SI:

Considering that iniquitous and contradictory laws are regularly being violated by the very people who framed them, or who have the duty to ensure their enforcement;

Considering that the Cameroonian electoral system and the massive irregularities and frauds which occur at all Cameroonian elections have constantly been condemned by international observers (including the NDI, IFES, the Community of French-speaking countries and the Commonwealth);

Considering that arbitrary arrests, torture, imprisonment without trial and assassinations of members of the opposition, editors, journalists and ordinary citizens are constant and commonplace in Cameroon, and that this situation is regularly being condemned by international human rights organisations;

Considering that the absence of democracy, individual liberties and the permanent violation of human rights, laws and regulations, and the lack of transparency in the management of public affairs constitute manifest evidence of bad government which is promoting a socially explosive situation and Cameroon's increasing indebtedness;

Notes with deep regret that by refusing to submit to constitutional procedures to ensure transparency in the acquisition of wealth by Cameroonians who direct public institutions and services, the President is promoting the very corruption which he claims to combat;

Underlines that the situation in Cameroon and the consequences which flow from it strengthen the bad image of a large number of African States;

Therefore:

Condemns the existence of a State which claims to be constitutional but which fails to make clear and socially just laws, and fails to abide by such laws;

Demands an electoral system which guarantees free and transparent elections, under the control of an independent election committee;

Further demands the abolition of all bad laws which contribute to the loss of liberties for the individual and the press, and which encourage arbitrary arrest and imprisonment;

Urges, within the framework of solidarity within the Socialist International family, that every member party take up the cause of democracy and human rights in Africa - and in Cameroon in particular - by imposing legal, political and economic sanctions against States shown to have violated these universal values;

Further urges member parties to participate in the struggle against the diversion of public funds and corruption;

In conclusion, the problems affecting Cameroon constitute a reflection of the challenges which face Africa, and the Socialist International will continue to support and work energetically with the democratic forces in the region.

RESOLUTION ON WESTERN SAHARA

The Socialist International reaffirms its resolution on Western Sahara adopted at the SI Council in Cape Town on 10-11 July 1995, considering the efforts aimed at finding a just, peaceful and lasting solution to the Western Sahara conflict.

The SI welcomes the outcome of the Houston Agreement which was successfully mediated by the former Secretary of State James Baker III, and calls upon Morocco and the Polisario Front to abide by its letter and spirit.

The SI declares its agreement with the United Nations and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), on the organisation of a free, fair and transparent referendum on self-determination in accordance with the terms of the peace plan and the Houston Agreement, as accepted by Morocco and Polisario.

The SI appeals to the authorities of MINURSO (Mission of the United Nations in Western Sahara), to ensure the participation of observers and the international press during the different stages of implementation of the peace process and during the referendum.

The SI calls upon Morocco and Polisario to fully cooperate with MINURSO for the holding of a free, fair and democratic referendum for the people of Western Sahara.

RESOLUTION ON CHIAPAS, MEXICO

Original: Spanish

The Council of the Socialist International, meeting in Oslo:

Calls on the government of Mexico and the parties and political forces of that country to reestablish conditions for dialogue and a negotiated peaceful solution of the conflict in Chiapas.

Demands the investigation and punishment of those responsible materially and intellectually for the massacre at Acteal. Only with an absolute respect for the rule of law will it be possible to end the uncertainty, tension and series of violent episodes of the sort mentioned.

Considers it necessary to raise to a constitutional level the San Andres de Larrainzar agreements signed by the Federal Government and the Zapatista Army of National Liberation, EZLN, and to put into action a policy of dialogue and consensus which would allow the respect for human rights and the reestablishment of a peace dialogue involving the withdrawal of the Mexican army to its former positions.

Recommends the implementation of a policy to ease tension in order to bring back confidence to the parties concerned and the responsible adoption of decisions leading to the social and economic reform of the region, putting in first place the full recognition of the rights of the Indian peoples as set out in Resolution 169 of the International Labour Organisation, ILO.

**WOMEN AND POWER-SHARING:
LEADERSHIP AND STRATEGIES**

STATEMENT

The equal participation of women and men in government, in the economy, in cultural life and in society is reflective of the level of democracy in that society. A true democracy cannot and does not exclude women. This is true for communities, nations and international institutions.

For Socialist International Women, however, the goal is not simply to elect more women to positions of power in the world's parliaments. The social, economic and political structures that prevent women from truly exercising their rights in a democratic society must also be changed. We must understand the gender ramifications of policies in order to establish policies and programmes that will enhance women's equality and empowerment.

Thus, from the point of view of socialist, social democratic and labour women, several aspects of gender politics must be addressed in order for women to achieve equality. Measures must be implemented to ensure that women are represented at all levels of government and party structure. Affirmative action must be taken to promote women within these institutions, for example:

- the preparation of more gender-balanced lists of candidates for elections of any kind;
- the assurance of gender-balanced representation in party structures;
- the promotion of women to leadership positions, such as ministries and executive positions in international institutions;
- the close scrutiny of the media to ensure that women's issues are put on the public agenda and that women in public positions are well represented.

The promotion of women in and of itself will not necessarily strengthen women's position in society. Strong support should be given to women who are committed to strengthening women's position in society. Women elected to office should act on their commitment by addressing the social, economic and cultural barriers facing most women.

An important strategy for achieving power for women is to reshape policies and programmes to ensure that the situation of women is

positively addressed. We must support programmes that provide for investment in people, and particularly women. Such programmes will address those areas where gender differences and inequalities place an additional burden on women. Programmes must also be evaluated to ensure that they do not explicitly or implicitly discriminate against women.

Ensuring the equality and empowerment of women will thus require nothing less than the restructuring of our societies, economies and governments. The equal representation of women and men in decision-making processes in politics and economics, in addition to being an issue of human rights and democracy, contributes to good governance and ensures a more just and productive development of societies.

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