

Meeting of the Committee on Local Authorities of the Socialist International, Mexico City, 23-24 July 2001

The Committee on Local Authorities of the Socialist International convened in Mexico City on 23 and 24 July.

The meeting, which was hosted by the Party of Democratic Revolution (PRD) and the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), was chaired by Hermes Binner (Mayor of Rosario, Argentina, PSP), Chair of the Committee.

More than forty delegates, including mayors and local authority representatives from Africa, Europe and Latin America, discussed themes which included a Charter for cities governed by socialists, indicators of the quality of urban life, and the fiscal autonomy of cities.

The Committee gave special attention to preparations for the III World Conference of Mayors of the Socialist International which will take place in Athens in November.

The Committee issued the Declaration of Mexico.

List of Participants.

DECLARATION OF MEXICO

Original: Spanish

Members of the Socialist International Committee on Local Authorities met in Mexico City on 23 and 24 July 2001, hosted by the Party of Democratic Revolution and the Institutional Revolutionary Party.

At this meeting we began the process of defining a charter for cities governed by socialists. We also discussed the issues of fiscal autonomy, and indicators of the quality of urban life, within the framework of preparations for our Third World Conference of Mayors of the Socialist International, which will take place in Athens, Greece, in November.

We believe that as local governments we are closer to the people and are aware of their needs and the potential for development of our cities and regions.

This is why we are working on the preparation of a Charter of Cities Governed by Socialists, which will include our commitments and actions towards deepening democracy, promoting equality, developing solidarity, and improving the standard of living of the people, within the framework of the challenges imposed by increasing global interdependence.

We are convinced of the need to deal with globalisation at a local level, because this is where democratic participation of citizens, access to employment, and mechanisms for social welfare, and for the preservation and protection of our environment, are most easily defined.

At the meeting our will to form efficient, effective, financially prudent and transparent local governments was reaffirmed.

In this respect, the meeting agreed on the need to promote a new way of doing politics in order to face the challenges of governing cities through greater citizen participation.

We believe that a distinctive feature of socialist local authorities is the way in which they promote policies for democratic participation and inclusion, incorporating the opinions of the citizens, men and women, in the planning, implementation and control of public policies.

We believe that State subsidiarity is the best way to ensure the fair and sustainable development of our people, and as Socialists we are therefore in favour of devolving public functions to local government. We feel it is essential that this process be accompanied by greater financial support for local governments, so as to allow them to fully exercise their autonomy.

During the meeting and in the discussion on this subject, the Mexican mayors pointed out that the Government in their country had submitted to the Congress a proposal for fiscal reform, based on a consumer tax which would not include measures favouring fiscal federalism. These mayors presented various proposals to increase the power and resources of Mexican municipalities, starting with a federalist reform of the Constitution and fiscal laws, tending towards federalism.

As regards indicators of the quality of urban life, the members of the Committee believe it is essential to have reliable data, which would allow us to measure developments in this respect.

We know that information is never unbiased, and that it is influenced by the philosophical and political concepts on which it is based. Our interest lies in indicators which assess the quality of life of our people. Human beings are at the centre of our concerns and we want to measure progress in terms of increased life expectancy, lower infant mortality, access to education, health care, food, housing, and in terms of job creation, greater public safety and environmental protection.

In this sense, the Committee undertakes to examine the relevance of the indicators proposed by international organisations and bodies such as Habitat II and Istanbul+5.

During this meeting in Mexico, the Committee made decided progress in preparing the Third World Conference of Mayors of the Socialist International in Athens, which will bring together mayors, municipal authorities and councillors from our parties all over the world. On that occasion we will work together, as we have done here, to guarantee the right of all people to a decent, prosperous and happy life in all our cities.