

Declaration on democracy

Meeting at the United Nations, Geneva on 12-13 December 2014, the Council of the Socialist International held discussions under the theme of 'our work to gain new democracies and strengthen democratic governance'. Council delegates reflected that where democracy was being strengthened around the world, it was in a great many cases due to the efforts of member parties of the Socialist International. In other countries, where democracy is weak or absent, our members are leading the struggle in favour of this basic right.

In line with the deep and fundamental commitment of the Socialist International to the establishment, development, strengthening and protection of democracy, the Council recognises the indispensable role of democratic institutions. A particular challenge to democracy occurs when democratically elected governments employ undemocratic practices to drive through their agenda and consolidate power. Solid institutions guarantee democratic rights and are a safeguard against the emergence of governments with authoritarian tendencies that have been legitimised by the democratic process.

A more representative and inclusive state is necessary. This means that the state should be connected with its citizens to ensure mass participation and genuine representation. Democracy must not be allowed to stagnate, but be a dynamic process which we constantly strive to improve. We must look for the best way to ensure that the most vital role of democracy is fulfilled, that is to say the representation of the freely expressed wishes of the electorate.

Dissatisfaction with the electoral process creates disaffection with the political system and is beneficial to extremist parties and ideologies that have been able to benefit from this feeling of alienation. It is vitally important that our movement is able to engage and give hope to young people and become educators for the next generation. Increasing equality of opportunities to education is the only way to address the causes that enable extremist ideologies to gain ground.

Transparency and the struggle against corruption go hand in hand with democracy, in order that those who exercise power are permanently accountable to those who elected them to those positions. Open and participatory government administration can bring citizens closer to public issues and reinforce their inclusion in a democratic decision-making system. Member parties of the Socialist International who are in government should work to strengthen this element of their governance.

Next year the world will celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Conference and is an occasion for renewed political will and commitment for a strong, effective, accelerated implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), focussing on the redistribution of resources, opportunities and power. In order to contribute to this implementation, the SI and its member parties are committed to accelerating the achievement of an equal sharing of decision-making positions by the use of quotas.

Our belief is that political parties, and in particular those who are members of our global movement, can be agents for positive social and political change, by embracing democracy in its fullest capacity and acting as the guardians of the democratic process.