

**MEETING OF THE SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**
Dominican Republic, 9-10 May 2014

DECLARATION

Original: Spanish

The members of the Socialist International Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean (SICLAC) have opened and concluded a meeting on 9 and 10 May 2014 in the Dominican Republic recognizing, on the occasion of the sixteenth anniversary of the physical disappearance of Dr. José Francisco Peña Gómez, historical leader of the Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD) and of the Socialist International, his immense contribution to democratic socialism that today still constitutes a point of reference for our struggles.

The Committee expresses its firm support for the leaders of the PRD and their efforts to institutionally strengthen the party, maintain respect for its statutes and work for the fraternal unity of all its internal currents, in the spirit of conciliation and responsibility of their eternal leader, José Francisco Peña Gómez.

After two days of sessions, the Committee concludes with this Declaration on the three fundamental issues which were subject of intensive discussions by its members, namely: (i) building an economy with growth, equality and social progress for all; (ii) strengthening and deepening democracy: the new and continuing challenges; and (iii) the return of politics: the fundamental role of political parties.

I. Building an economy with growth, equality and social progress for all

Over the past three decades, Latin America and the Caribbean has succeeded in giving impulse to economic growth, reducing poverty and expanding democracy. However, growth has not been sufficient to eliminate structural poverty in our countries, which is a threat to the sustainability of our democracies.

We agree that to successfully combat poverty we require quality education, the best teachers and technology available, good jobs and opportunities for productive entrepreneurship, an inclusive system of health, that citizens have access to decent housing, with adequate service of clean water, electricity and sanitation. Today's States have to combat inequality, discrimination, exclusion and marginalization. Therefore inclusion, social justice, equity, gender parity and equality of opportunity are essential. Only with true social justice, can we build citizenship and ensure that there are no second-class citizens in our societies. Equality is a guarantee of full citizenship, of governance and of social peace.

To emerge from poverty, competent and ethical leadership is required and this demands a forthright fight against corruption, drug trafficking and organized crime. Full citizenship requires guaranteeing the citizens' fundamental right to security.

We must redefine the Social and Democratic State of Law. It is necessary to abandon the idea that the Social State means a large State and that the Liberal State implies one reduced. It is not about building a large State or a smaller one, but to consolidate a State which is more efficient, which is a guarantor, regulator and facilitator. A State that, on the basis of public-private partnerships, develops and manages major infrastructures and essential public services of quality and that are accessible to all.

It is necessary to build a State that encourages the participation of the private sector in development, that only take business initiatives where there is deficiency, but that never surrenders its duty to regulate the economy and to ensure social benefits and public services of quality for the most needy, be these provided by the State, private or third Sector. Only a State that focuses on its essential public obligations will be equipped to ensure its function as a Social State, and a guarantor of the rights of all.

II. Strengthening and deepening democracy: the new and continuing challenges.

To consolidate the electoral democracy that we have today and prevent the return of authoritarianism, better institutions are necessary. A democracy without the Rule of Law, without solid institutions, without guarantees of the fundamental rights of all, becomes a “democradura”, a democracy without democratic practices, which is the phenomenon that characterizes some current authoritarianisms legitimized through the electoral process.

Therefore, the reform of the State must ensure that it is more democratic and representative, more inclusive, participative and decentralized; a State connected with its citizens, which ensures participation and genuine social representation. We need reforms that make public management transparent and which guarantee the integrity of the administrators of our collective assets. The reform of the State that we propose is, therefore, much more than an administrative process: it is a dynamic redistribution of power and the return of power from the representatives to the citizens.

The new challenge is to become more democratic, decentralized and participative. We need, therefore, executive powers that are not devolved from the old autocratic systems or ‘*caudillismo*’, but which are at the forefront of a new democracy.

A special chapter of these reforms is the equal participation of women. Until we don’t achieve equality between men and women, there will be no effective democracy or full human development in our region.

III. For the return of politics: the fundamental role of political parties

Faced with the emergence of new social actors and new dimensions of civil society, we must rethink the role of political parties as articulators of the popular will. There is a need to establish a development paradigm stemming from a new interaction between civil society organizations and political parties.

We need parties that respect discipline and institutional structures, and that stimulate creative discussion and training. In today’s world, we have to put into practice a combination of the principles and values that represent social democracy and the opportunities offered by the new information technologies and communication.

Political parties today are not the only means of political action for citizens who are connected, informed and alert: there are new citizens, and therefore we need parties that are adequate for the new times.

And that purpose requires better leaders. That is why we must devote more time, resources, and energy to the intellectual and political training of our young people. Only with that investment our youth can we have political parties capable of driving the unpostponable fundamental reforms in our States and societies.

Finally, new forms of authoritarianism are perpetuated by the use of State resources in the electoral processes. Hence it is crucial that we have electoral regimes and political party systems that ensure equity and equality of opportunity in electoral contests and, therefore, democratic alternation in power.
