

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF THE SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL

Athens, Greece, 1-2 July 2011

OPENING

Luis Ayala, Secretary General of the Socialist International, opened the meeting of the Council, expressing the SI's solidarity with our Greek comrades and our sense of pride in the leadership of the country by Prime Minister George Papandreou, President of the Socialist International. The entire movement was today at his side as he faced the consequences of the damaging legacy of conservative policies and speculative attacks on the Greek economy with integrity and strength, maintaining focus on our priorities as social democrats. Before continuing, he reminded the Council that the proceedings were being streamed live through the SI's website and that of PASOK.

The agenda of the Council meeting was adopted.

The minutes of the previous Council meeting in Paris were adopted.

The SI Secretary General then invited the General Secretary of PASOK to address the Council on behalf of the host party.

Michalis Karchimakis, General Secretary of PASOK, Greece, welcomed participants to the Council meeting, noting that there were friends and comrades from across the world whose presence showed their solidarity with Greek citizens. This meeting was taking place at a time of critical developments that would determine the trans-global economy and sustainable growth; a time in which distances were smaller, and events in one part of the world had an immediate impact on the rest of the planet, as had been seen in the recent tragedy in Japan. The damages to the nuclear reactors of Fukushima raised once again the major issue of nuclear power, so it was not by chance that this issue was one of the main topics on the Council's agenda.

Here in the Mediterranean area, he continued, major changes were occurring that would define the future. We therefore needed an in-depth and meticulous analysis of developments so as to come up with the right policies to enable firm steps to be taken towards establishing and developing democracy. The voices of the countries in this entire area must be heard, and as the largest political family in the international community, the SI must contribute to this purpose.

He hoped that the discussion on developments in the Arab world and the Middle East would lead to political proposals to strengthen social justice, progress, democratisation and global peace. In critical moments the Socialist International had always been able to consolidate a dynamic presence in international fora. PASOK had long been actively involved in SI activities and despite major challenges, his party was still dedicated to an outward-looking approach. Only solidarity and the alliance of progressive powers across the world could curb conservative powers which at the global and European level were currently trying to destroy some of socialism's key achievements. In the name of citizens who had put their trust in us, he said, we had to pursue our political interventions.

Confident that the meeting would be constructive, thorough and fruitful, he again welcomed the SI Council to Greece.

George Papandreou, Prime Minister of Greece, President of the SI, on behalf of the Greek people, its government, and PASOK, gave a warm welcome to so many friends whose presence showed their support for Greece, a proud country and a proud people. In trying times, painful but patriotic decisions had been taken in order to save workers' and pensioners' wages and to prevent the default of small and medium-sized enterprises, and to give time and opportunity for real change in Greek society.

He thanked the Socialist International and SI Women for their solidarity and vote of confidence in the potential of the Greek people, and indeed the potential of all people when they faced difficult crises. This was the spirit of our international movement. Participants, he said, had been given a small gift of olive oil and honey as a demonstration of Greece's potential: its beauty and resources, its Mediterranean diet and produce, its shipping, aquaculture and hospitality, its new potential for renewable energy, and its struggles for democracy. Greece was not a poor country, but it had been mismanaged, and many comrades from Latin America, Africa and Asia had had similar experiences where the great potential and resources of their country had also been squandered. Mismanagement, he pointed out, was a highly political term. At the heart of the crisis, whether Greek, European, or global, were questions of how to manage our societies and our economies in a just, equitable and democratic way: questions such as how humanity's huge potential was managed, how power was distributed, how the investment in military power was handled, and why the strength of the media was concentrated in so few hands. He pointed to the example of Fukushima raising doubts about the whole issue of nuclear power, and he asked whether we were creating more fair or more unequal and impoverished societies.

Greece today, Papandreou said, was paying for the hubris of past political practices that were deeply conservative, benefitting the rich and powerful, rather than the transparent and open governance which was the basis of democratic societies, whose creativity, potential for growth, and competitiveness had thus been stifled. Therefore today people were demonstrating not only from the pain of austerity and injustice, but for a vision of a more accountable, democratic path to social, economic and institutional change. This Greek demand was also a global one. The government had made the decision to change both itself and the country, and had taken on responsibilities beyond its share after five and a half years of conservative rule that had made a mess of both deficits and debt. His government had shouldered their responsibilities and decided, with strong confirmation from voters, to fight against difficult winds for a more just society and a better, more prosperous Greece. Europe had also given its vote of confidence with a major package of support to continue these changes and make Greece viable. He expressed appreciation to all the citizens, parliaments, and governments of Europe for their solidarity, and especially to those socialist forces that had shown such strong alliance with Greece's efforts.

The Greek crisis, however, also highlighted a much wider crisis of democratic governance and whether we had the will and the power to determine our future democratically, facing up to challenges effectively and using our resources to the benefit of our citizens.

He thought that conservative Europe today was not realising its potential, and this was a political challenge that was also relevant for what was happening around the world. The initial European project had been for peace and prosperity after World War II, and particularly to unite in a common market. But it continued to be a project for peace and democracy between East and West, uniting peoples and societies, and resolving conflicts such as in Cyprus and the Balkans.

Now, he continued, Europe had another unrealised potential: to humanise the globalisation of the economy. This was a continuing challenge for progressives around the world: we had to pool our sovereignty to deal with all the new crises, yet Europe was stuck and instead of moving ahead was unfortunately mired in very conservative politics of fear, nationalism, racism and xenophobia. We had seen how difficult it was to deal with some of the systemic problems such as the single currency when we had no single strong governance of our economies. Many problems had been hidden, even in Greece where they had been able to borrow cheaply rather than make the necessary changes, and then when crisis struck could not borrow at all while others could. The differences in interest rates meant that Greece could not be competitive. We had to find the will to deal with these systemic problems.

Europe could and should become a progressive model for the governance of our planet as had been discussed in the Presidium meeting the previous day, he said. Regional structures everywhere in the world could be strengthened to represent people so as to face in a more democratic way the difficult challenges that confronted us. A progressive Europe could do this, but Europe needed to live up to its potential. Greece had delivered on a very difficult challenge: now it was time for Europe and the international community to deliver. Greece was not alone in facing powers beyond its borders, beyond its control, and beyond its democratic institutions; powers that affected us all daily, and which therefore needed a united response.

Papandreou then mentioned some of the difficult questions he had been pondering in recent months, such as the still unresolved problems of the financial system since the crisis in 2008; the lack of transparency in financial markets and in credit default swaps; and the huge market betting on Greece's failure. Greek parliamentarians had taken very difficult votes in recent days because they wanted to create trust in their determination to move ahead, but if a rating agency were to degrade them one more notch the agency would have more power in their decisions than the Greek people and their parliament. This was unacceptable if we wanted a democratic world.

He asked if we were too weak to fight tax evasion and tax havens. The workers and pensioners could not escape taxes and yet there was an established class who could take their money out and hide it around the world, robbing the people of the resources that could be used for growth and social cohesion. Were we too weak to stand up to the media hype, the fear-mongering that Greece was going to fall apart; or too frightened to create a financial transaction tax that would make resources available for jobs and the difficult transition out of crisis, he asked. Big projects were possible at the regional level, in Europe with Eurobonds, that would create jobs and move to green growth with maybe even a CO2 tax to help the environment. Were we too fearful to make these decisions, to meet these democratic challenges that were neither financial nor technical issues, but challenges to our progressive movement?

These questions highlighted the importance of our international movement, he said, because in addition to national and local actions, we must act at the regional and global level as we had done with the proposals on global warming in Copenhagen, with the Stiglitz Commission and its very relevant proposals on the financial crisis, and with our work on nuclear power and proliferation. We must continue to maintain a vision for the younger generation. But these questions also posed a more fundamental one about the kind of economies and societies we wanted to create. Did we want competitiveness to be based on a lack of labour laws or women's rights and cheap migrant labour, or on an educated labour force with creativity, participation and innovation? Though it might sound utopian, we did in fact have examples in our movement such as the Nordic welfare state which demonstrated

that you can have social cohesion and the traditional democratic conditions we strive for and still be the most competitive in the world.

Our major problem was the question of equality, not simply within our societies but between them, and between our citizens and a new global establishment which is able to amass great riches and powers that go beyond our borders and over which our democratic institutions have very little or no control.

Papandreou cited the desire for democracy shown in Tahrir Square where they were seeking a new democracy, and in Greece where peaceful demonstrators wanted to see the renewal of democracy. The younger generation knew about the global problems and saw the great potential that was being harnessed by special interests and concentrated in the hands of the few. No wonder they felt a huge frustration and questioned our systems and our democracies. We faced the great challenge of renewing our democratic societies in a different way in view of a globalising economy.

The Socialist International was committed to standing by the democratic forces of the Arab Spring, he continued. This meeting would be hearing from some of the protagonists of those dramatic changes, and we would be helping in their fight for democracy, human rights and the rule of law. These revolutions brought the opportunity to all forces of society to express themselves, and obviously a lot of things were still at stake: new political parties needed time to develop; in Egypt, basic questions about the drafting of a new Constitution were prominent. We had to construct societies that would avert sectarian clashes and religious, ethnic or gender divides.

Clearly the Arab revolutions were a culmination of deep frustration arising from regimes that initially started with ideas of liberation from foreign domination, and economic progress, but ended up with distorted policies, corrupt ruling classes and a skewed concentration of power. Our organisation, rooted in the culture of internationalism, was here to help and to strengthen these democratic endeavours that were more relevant today than ever.

Willy Brandt, that leader of rare insight and foresight, had understood the necessity for internationalism based on consensus. The SI would continue to operate on the principle of consensus-building, setting up a new working group to strengthen our movement and make the necessary changes to reinforce the democratic institutions in our movement and in our societies, and to deal with the global economy in complex times.

Greece was living through extremely rough times that required hard choices in order to protect people and move society forward, a very tough challenge to democratic institutions. He appreciated all the solidarity and cooperation in fighting for justice and change internationally.

Greece cherished democracy not only because it was an ancient culture, and a cradle of democracy, but also because it had fought for democracy in recent history against fascism, authoritarianism and the dictatorship of the '60s. Today Greece was again in the front line of the battle and its crisis was only an example of the crisis in our democratic societies and of the challenges for our political family. Whatever might happen, he was determined that Greece would strengthen its people and its democracy. The presence of all at this meeting, and the solidarity and understanding shown, gave Greece the strength it needed to continue on a difficult path. And this, he said, was the strength of our movement, the solidarity we have as comrades and friends to fight together in difficult times and to continue against all odds. We would survive and we would win, he concluded.

Luis Ayala announced that before embarking on the first theme, the Council had to deal with the important matter of a change in the membership of the Presidium, as Vice-President Gordon Brown, former leader of the British Labour Party and former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, had stepped down. The Labour Party had nominated its deputy leader, Harriet Harman, to take his place and Ayala asked for Council's approval. This was confirmed by acclamation. Ayala welcomed Harriet Harman as a Vice-President of the Socialist International and invited her to take a seat on the podium.

First main theme: ADVANCING PEOPLE'S HOPES IN THE ARAB WORLD: SUPPORTING THE VISION OF FREEDOMS AND RIGHTS FOR ALL

Jalal Talabani, Iraq, PUK, President of the Republic of Iraq, SI Vice-President, congratulated Prime Minister George Papandreou and expressed his pride in having such a President of the Socialist International.

He said that others might be better able to express views on liberating Arab countries, but he would make some general remarks about the popular uprising and revolt, particularly in that very important country, Egypt. Developments there were shaking the Arab and Muslim world and he wanted to say something about what to expect in that great country. The revolt by the Egyptian people, well educated and civilised, had been started by the younger generation but had activated all of society who wanted change and democracy. He considered this a very important historic movement that had not yet achieved the final goal, which was to change the infrastructure of society. We did not yet know who would replace the old regime, but he had been reassured by friends that although the Egyptian people were a Muslim people, Egypt was not a Muslim state; the Sahawat movement was not strong enough to seize power or prevent a democratic regime, and inside that movement there were divisions and people who wanted to follow the example of Mr Erdogan's party in Turkey; and that the Christians there were also a strong force for democracy.

There were also, he continued, other democratic groups in Egypt that were reorganising and starting to work. He had been advised that the foreign influence in Egypt, especially that of the Saudis, was not strong enough to dissuade the people from their desire for democracy, and he hoped that a democratic parliamentary regime would emerge as an example for the rest of the Arab and Muslim world.

As he had done at the last SI meeting, Talabani called on the Socialist International to pay great attention to Egypt, to support the democratic forces there by every means possible and to help them play their role in the new developments.

He said he had fewer details about Syria and Libya, but having lived for years in Syria he had good contacts with both the opposition forces and the government. The popular uprising there was demanding change, democracy and civilian rule. A meeting of about 200 opposition members in Damascus - the first time such a thing had been allowed - had issued a statement saying they were part of the peaceful uprising of the Syrian people for freedom, democracy, a multi-party system, and a democratic civil state.

Syria was a complicated society, he continued, with Alawis being the main rulers through the Ba'ath party which had about two million members from all sectors of society. The Christians in Syria were always in favour of democracy, freedom and peaceful coexistence but there was now an ugly slogan from the start of the demonstrations designed to frighten Christians into supporting the government.

The Druze formed a third section but they were still not engaged in the uprising. Fourthly there were the Kurds who had already suffered so much, even being deprived of their citizenship, although recently the government had given 300 thousand Kurds the right to be Syrian citizens and to celebrate their national day.

Unfortunately Syrian political parties were very much divided among 300 parties and some smaller groups, but there were three main ones. The first was afraid of Turkey's influence and was supporting the government while calling for democracy and human rights. The two others were also demanding democracy and human rights but not a change of regime. The largest section of society, he said, were Sunni Arabs who formed at least 55% of society and were a strong movement against the government and pro regime-change. The main force amongst them was the Muslim Brotherhood which was now active in the uprising in different Syrian cities. We were surely all aware of the different attitudes of international society towards Syria, with some Europeans and the USA calling for more pressure against Syria, while Russia, China and other states were resisting this and calling instead for non-interference in Syria's internal affairs.

Turning to Yemen, Talabani said that Yemeni society was divided between the forces headed by President Ali Abdullah Saleh and the opposition. There were two main groups in the opposition: the younger generation who were for fundamental change in society; and an alliance of different parties who had accepted the solution presented by the Arab states. If the latter could convince President Abdullah Saleh, currently in hospital in Riyadh, to accept that proposal there would be a peaceful solution for a while. There were many other differences in Yemeni society and recently a call for dividing Yemen into South and North as there were different sections of the country.

In his view these revolts or uprisings were very important for the Arab world and if successful, as he hoped, would lead to democratic systems of government that would change not only the Middle East but could also bring a new political climate to the world. The Arab people had suffered too much from dictatorships that led nowhere: they constantly claimed to be defending the Palestinian people's legitimate rights but they could not do anything. They spent lots of money on arms but could not win a single battle, so the Arab people truly deserved new regimes. He asked the SI to pay more attention to the Arab world and to try to include more Arab delegations, and even include their language in the official languages of the SI.

Turning to Iraq, Talabani said his country had held three free parliamentary elections and three referenda for a new constitution, the draft of which had been unanimously adopted and voted for by more than twelve and a half million Iraqis. They had always called for a coalition government because Iraq was made up of so many different religious and ethnic groups that no one party or section could be chosen to rule. Christians in Iraq had played a very positive democratic role and helped in the civilisation and culture of Iraq but had unfortunately been obliged by daily attacks in the Arab sectors to leave for Iraqi Kurdistan, or Syria or elsewhere. When he spoke with European ambassadors in Baghdad he encouraged them to help their citizens to stay by financing their humanitarian projects in Iraq where they had always played their part against fundamentalism and terrorism.

The current government in Iraq represented all parties but there were still differences between the three government forces: the ministries of Defence, of the Interior and of Security, and there were sharp attacks among different groups. He had therefore called a meeting at which the commitment to reaching agreement, as on the Arbil initiative of President Barzani which all had accepted before the formation of the government, had been confirmed. Talabani hoped this would be done in future and

thus allow Iraq, a big country, rich in its people and its wealth, and which had always been one of the most important Arab countries, to now be a democratic example to other parts of the Arab world.

Concerning interference in internal affairs of the Middle East, Talabani thought many groups were now trying to play a role. He hoped Turkey, which was a great neighbour to Iraq and Syria, would play a positive role in stabilisation and democratisation and by showing an example of peaceful negotiation in helping mediate between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Syrian government. If the problem was not resolved peacefully and soon, and the demands of the Syrian people for democracy and human rights were not respected, he thought there would be civil war because there was no force large enough to change the regime easily: the regime would resist and this would be dangerous for all the people of the Middle East, affecting regimes in Beirut and in Palestine, and also the relations between Arabs and Israel. The Socialist International had a role to play in the Arab world and should support by every means the democratic, progressive and left forces' efforts to reach agreement.

Reminding participants of the Socialist International commitment to fight against the death penalty, Talabani asked the SI to give more attention to this matter in Iraq. He had never signed any death sentence, not even for Saddam Hussein. He invited the SI to send a delegation to visit Iraq and to see the reality of great achievements, despite media propaganda. The average standard of living had risen dramatically. There were many good projects to rebuild Iraq but they were still in need of more and he asked comrades to encourage businesses to participate in that rebuilding.

In closing, he again appealed for support to the Arab democratic movement which was so important for the history of the world, for humanity and for peace and stability in the Middle East.

George Papandreou welcomed the suggestion of greater Arab participation, and the SI's support for the democratic movement and the abolition of the death penalty in Iraq. That support would be given. He especially honoured President Talabani's commitment to defy the pressure against that very important humanitarian principle which we all shared.

He then introduced the representative from Egypt, a professor, a politician and a fighter for democracy.

Mona Makram Ebeid, Egypt, expressed the honour she felt to be addressing the Socialist International, a movement that had given life to a new global social democracy. She thanked PASOK and the SI Women with whom she had recently met, and she congratulated the Greek people for standing up to their national responsibilities.

Everyone had surely seen the courage and determination of the young Egyptian women and men in their struggle to overturn a despotic regime despite the brutal repression that had cost hundreds of innocent lives; but before celebrating this historic revolution, we should ask whether anything had changed, and if so, was it for the better? Her heart was telling her it probably was, but her head said it was far too soon to tell. There was reason for both optimism and fear, she said. Having long articulated various grievances, Egyptians were now zeroing in on fundamental political reform to solve their problems. Nothing would improve until society got its politics right: while people lacked jobs and were beaten by the police; while the rulers were corrupt and the international order only served the will of the powerful state, the solution must start with a better political system structured to make authorities accountable and to avoid the concentration of power in permanent rulers.

International actors also needed to confront this new change, she continued. Western officials would admit in private that the Arab regimes were venal and repressive, but the international community was prepared to ignore that fact if those regimes seemed indispensable. Now the era in which western decision-makers could view Arab societies primarily through the eyes of Arab rulers was over, as was the idea that Arab autocrats were the only alternative to chaos or Islamic extremism.

The atmosphere in Cairo was increasingly normal, she said, economic productivity and tourism were slowly reviving, prosecutions were declining, and with parliamentary elections planned for September, the main struggle now was among political forces whose three main fears were that military rule would persist; that the former National Democratic Party would re-emerge; and that the Muslim Brotherhood would dominate. The main dilemma now was whether to proceed with elections in order to end the post-revolutionary rule of the military, or to slow down the electoral timetable and give priority to the writing of a new Constitution. New parties needed time to organise and traditional groups associated with the January revolution were calling for guarantees concerning the new Constitution. Tens of thousands of Egyptians were seeking to define a new social contract at the heart of a civic, democratic modern state, and the struggle was about who would embody that impulse. The most important element was constitutionalism and how citizens' rights would be guaranteed under a system anchored in the rule of law and the constancy of government. Egypt was now in phase two of the struggle to transform the revolutionary promise into a functional constitutional democracy.

Turning to the three forces competing for control in Egypt, she said these were the army, the Muslim Brotherhood, and various other opposition organisations.

The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces had made it clear that it was eager to relinquish formal power to civilian authority, but had recently shown a desire to retain significant political influence. A conference she had attended in June had recommended that the new Constitution should make the military the protector of civilian institutions which, though controversial, was fitting in times of crisis. The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces had shown some fidelity to principles such as a rapid transition to civilian rule, a specific sequence of elections, and finally a new Constitution, but nothing yet had made clear how it intended to achieve these goals, and it was refusing to open up the secretive process by which it makes its decisions so it was totally unpredictable.

For the first time, the Muslim Brotherhood had been allowed to form a new party, the Freedom and Justice Party, which had a strong ideology based on their understanding of Islam. Being the only party to oppose dictatorship and to survive, despite great efforts by successive governments to suppress them, had given them a certain mystique. They had tremendous financial and operational support both within and outside the country. We should prevent smaller parties being co-opted by the Brotherhood, she said; incorporating them into the formal political arena could help in their being seen as just another political party albeit the most conservative and most committed to Islam. Currently they were pushing for early elections so as to use their popularity before other groups got organised and built up support.

The third force was the mainly democratic non-Islamic parties, liberals, leftists and socialists, who feared that the Freedom and Justice Party would do well in elections and thereby have the largest say in shaping the Constitution. Against this background of polarisation, several groups, of which she herself was a part, had launched initiatives to prevent that Islamist domination. The most high-profile of these had been the statement released on June 20 by the Grand Imam of al-Azhar, the largest Islamic university in the world. It underlined that post-Mubarak Egypt should be a constitutional, democratic, modern state. The product of meetings between the professor and groups of intellectuals reflecting all

shades of affiliation and including representatives of the nearly 12-million Christian community, it was an effort to secure a commitment from the Army, the Brotherhood, and in some fashion society at large, to assert that the new Constitution must enshrine principles of universal human rights and that Egypt would be a civil, not a religious state. In essence it was very similar to a Bill of Rights. With the military protecting democracy and al-Azhar drawing the map of the future, she believed international solidarity for the enforcement of this process would be very welcome.

The pace and extent of political change in Egypt, she said, would depend greatly on the capacity of political and civil society to participate in the process and to bargain with the military Council and future public authorities to enforce a democratic transition.

On the economic side, Egypt faced a double problem, coping with the negative effects of the economic crisis resulting from the revolution, and dealing with the structural socio-economic problems left unaddressed by the previous regime and which contributed to its demise. She asked the International community to help repatriate Egypt's stolen assets in this time of great economic need. Economic wellbeing and the legitimacy of the political system were inextricably intertwined; Egypt's economic predicament was no secret and many were voicing concern about the revolution of the hungry. The USA and Canada should provide assistance to build up Egypt's stockpiles of food, particularly wheat, so that the government could ensure stable or even falling food prices over the next 12 months. Positive economic measures and an improvement in people's living conditions would reinforce public support for the process of transition.

In conclusion, Mona Makram Ebeid asserted that despite uncertainty, Egypt was still a pillar of the strategic architecture of the Middle East. One of the first fruits of the January revolution had been the reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah due to the credibility and commitment of the Foreign Minister of Egypt. Her country remained a peace partner with Israel and would have a disproportionate influence on trends and events, as President Talabani had said.

Economic and political risks loomed large but with the relative homogeneity of its 85 million people, the strength of its institutions, the untapped potential of its women, the brightness of its youth and with the residue of post-revolutionary enthusiasm, Egypt would carry the day: it was too big and too important to fail.

In ending she quoted Martin Luther King: "the arc of the moral universe is long but it bends towards justice."

Continuing on the theme of Egypt and the Arab Spring, **George Papandreou** then gave the floor to Tarek Amr, an Egyptian cyber-activist who had been present in Tahrir Square and had managed to inform global audiences about what was happening and thus helped to make the Egyptian revolution a global event.

Tarek Amr, Egyptian blogger, first thanked the Socialist International for the chance to talk about Egypt's pursuit of democracy in the country that created democracy. The Egyptian people, he said, had revolted for about 18 days until Mubarak had stepped down, but then the army was ruling and not the people, so it was hard to say whether it was really a revolution or a coup. But they believed in themselves and in building a democratic country from scratch which was why they would succeed sooner or later as the previous speaker had said.

Focusing first on forces other than the army, he saw the Muslim Brotherhood and the other fundamentalist Islamists as siding with the regime because they believed they had more power on the ground, and the sooner parliamentary elections were held, the more seats they would win.

Then there were people who were not members of the traditional parties but something like a new version of the Left who also wanted early elections because they believed the people must be given the power to choose whoever they wanted.

The liberals and old traditional parties, perhaps somewhat to the right of the spectrum, had less support and therefore wanted to postpone the elections in order to achieve the sort of democracy they wanted. From all this arose the question that in recent months had been on the streets: what should come first, the Constitution, or parliamentary elections, or poor people? The liberals wanted the Constitution, the Brotherhood wanted parliament, and the leftists wanted people's rights to come first by raising the minimum wage, and giving the poor access to higher education or free medical care and so on. Each group was trying to impose its own agenda. The TV media had not changed except that they now attacked Mubarak and praised the army instead. The Brotherhood had their own very influential TV channel, and the liberals had some channels through which they were trying to impose their agendas and increase their power on the ground.

On the other hand, he continued, the internet and the new media, used especially by young Egyptians, were mainly for liberals and leftists to discuss their ideologies and opinions, but a referendum had shown that those new media were not as effective as had been thought.

The media could create the momentum for a revolution but could not reach every individual, especially when about 40% of the population was illiterate. They therefore had to rely on other ways such as going onto the streets. One friend of his had taken the initiative to write a draft Constitution, "our Constitution", using the internet to spread it about, and then taking a draft to every city and town and getting people to write down their dreams for the Constitution. They did not have to wait for the élite or for judges and lawyers to draft some constitution that would not represent their own hopes and dreams. In concluding he said he believed that the Egyptian people, who had succeeded in overthrowing the regime, would achieve democracy some day even though they could not say whether it would be tomorrow or in the next few years.

Mohamed Ghalib Ahmed, Yemeni Socialist Party, brought greetings on behalf of Dr Yassin Saeed Noman, Secretary General of his party, who had been prevented from participating due to urgent commitments. He thanked the SI President for his solidarity with the peaceful youth revolution in Yemen and with his and other opposition parties known as the Joint Meeting Parties. He said that Comrade Luis Ayala had been in constant contact with their Secretary General and had made preparations to visit Yemen and review the situation. He thanked all the other comrades for their cooperation and solidarity.

For five months young men and women in Yemen had been pursuing a dauntless revolution to peacefully topple the dictatorial family autocracy and to build a state of law and order, freedom, democracy, equality and justice. Hundreds of thousands were still sitting defiantly in the squares. He said that although Yemenis had more than 50 million pieces of arms, all groups engaged in this revolution had abandoned their guns for the first time. They had confronted the terrorism and oppression of the state unprotected resulting in more than 394 martyrs, 863 wounded by live bullets, 8,482 suffering the effects of corrosive gases, and hundreds of people kidnapped. The most prominent

massacre had been committed on March 18, 2011 when snipers pointed their guns at Change Square in the capital Sana'a killing 55 young men and injuring more than 1,000 people. In another, on May 29, the Freedom Square in Taiz was shelled, 50 were killed and thousands injured. Other massacres occurred in Aden, Ibb, Hodeidah and Albaidha. Yemeni women were providing food and medical care at the sit-ins which became platforms for intellectual and political debate among innovative people from different parts of the country.

Ahmed stressed the peaceful nature that had unified the Yemeni people in this revolution. Revenge crimes between tribes had ceased, social peace prevailed and the only guns being fired were those of the bloody regime. The peaceful struggle had started in 2006 through the opposition presidential candidate Faisal Bin Shamlan. A peaceful movement in the southern part of the country, rejecting the military rule imposed since the 1994 war, had met with all forms of state terror, leaving hundreds of martyrs and thousands injured or detained. The current youth revolution represented the third stage of this peaceful struggle and was a historic turning point in Yemeni life. Discussions were taking place concerning the goals of the future state, and seeking solutions to Yemen's problems including the southern case, the six bloody wars in the north, and economic, social and human rights issues. The revolution inspired hope for a brighter future and the dignified life sought by millions of daily protesters throughout the country. In this respect, he said, they saluted the revolutions of their brothers in Tunisia and Egypt which also brought inspiration and marked the eruption of the giant peaceful youth revolution.

The Yemeni Socialist Party, he continued, with its partners in the JMP, was struggling to get out of the severe crisis resulting from a corrupt regime. Dialogues with that regime had failed from 1997 until the start of the revolution in February 2011. Dr. Noman was periodically chairing the JMP and they had interacted with international players and friends in the EU and USA, and the initiative of the Gulf countries under American and European auspices. Although the President had requested that initiative, he had refused to sign it when all the opposition parties had done so. It contained key points including the resignation of President Saleh and the authorization of the Vice-President, Secretary General of the Ruling Party, to be a transitional president. He spoke of the miserable situation brought about by the current regime, the sanctions imposed in response to peaceful demonstrations, and its use of Al-Qaeda as a threat to extort financial and military aid from other countries. He assured participants that after the ousting of this regime, they would find a new Yemen free from Al-Qaeda, terrorism and violence, governed by a civil state, the Constitution, and the rule of law.

In conclusion he asked for trust in the Yemeni Socialist Party to continue to honour the noble goals of the Socialist International in its peaceful political struggle. He asked the Council to affirm its solidarity with the youth revolution and with the Yemeni women who were active in its front line, and he sought condemnation of all terrorist and oppressive practices against peaceful activists, and the prosecution of murderers in national and international courts. He urged SI support for his party and the JMP in their struggles for a peaceful revolution towards freedom, democracy and social justice in Yemen. He also renewed his party's request for full membership of the SI.

Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, PES President, held up a cell phone and reminded participants that just a few years ago people thought this was just another IT invention that people could use for chatting with each other. Now we knew that because of this invention no dictatorship could hide, close its doors around its people and oppress them. It was now only a question of time before dictatorship anywhere on this planet was cut down. He suggested the SI should listen to this new way of change. When he had seen young Tunisians and Arab women using this new technology to communicate so fast, showing such

courage, he had realised that this was part of their liberation, that technology in the right political framework could indeed be the servant of the people. This was the good news for the young people, the women and all the hardworking people in northern Africa and across the world.

This was a new time in which it was no longer a question of whether you could get democracy and freedom, but when and how. On behalf of European progressives, socialists and social democrats, and the whole of the SI, he expressed solidarity with the people of the Arab world who had won their fight against the fear of confronting dictatorship, had paid an incredible price, but with the future and technology on their side could no longer be denied.

It was also time for Europe to understand what richness was, he continued. Greece was rich in its beauty, its nature and its people, but others were trying to impose the old societies on the future. Money was not everything and he was convinced that money and investments in the future had to go hand in hand with the true business of how we treated nature and each other to ensure that our children and grandchildren had even better times on Earth than we had had. He saw some barriers to this vision. Recalling Mahatma Gandhi's saying that Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need but not every man's greed, he thought one of the worst barriers to democracy and freedom was the narrow inward-looking greed that was nationalism.

When the banks had gone on bended knee to all the prime ministers and governments begging to be rescued because they were 'too big to fail' the governments had agreed, expecting the banks to show less greediness in future, but instead they had increased their bonuses and speculations. Four of the world's largest hedge-funds, had speculated against George Papandreou and this wonderful country, its government and PASOK. They would soon put up interest rates to 17 or 18 percent, totally out of pace with the real economy, and with no thanks for having been bailed out. Therefore one of the greatest democratic challenges everywhere in the world was to bring greediness under control. Globalisation, financial markets and greediness were the most toxic cocktail we could have in the future. That was why we had to unite across our frontiers to have better regulation.

We had learned one thing more, he said: the financial markets were now beginning to turn against individual countries, because no single country could protect itself against financial markets that decided to speculate against it, pull it down, and earn money on its default. So the challenge now had changed: we needed to be 'too big to fail'. Conservative Europe had finally decided to make loans to Greece, and as George Papandreou had said, it had made two hard claims on Greece. He would have liked to have seen conservative Europe say: here is our loan to Greece, but certainly also here is our possibility for Greece to invest in the future. If Europe had been in other hands, our hands, the package for Greece would have been different, yet here was Prime Minister Papandreou, President of the SI, the man who had led Greece under the most difficult circumstances imaginable, talking about our common future and our hope, and he was right.

Rasmussen said he had been asked by a Greek radio station for his message to the Greek people, and had replied that he knew what poverty was, having come up from the bottom, but that with George Papandreou's leadership there was hope ahead, new jobs ahead, new social and educational opportunities, and we would stand together. He urged the Greek people not to think that the answer was in the streets: it was in cooperation and being united, and he asked the Council to make that answer clear to our Greek friends.

Papandreou had been so strong in understanding his people, he continued, and their frustrations, and yet still managed to persuade Europe that it must be fair to Greece. He expressed his pride in working with this President who could have cancelled this meeting but instead had given a wonderful speech and truly deserved a medal of solidarity, leadership, honesty and hope, for continuing in a powerful way the example of Willy Brandt and other SI leaders.

For the countries of South-East Asia, Africa and Latin America, he said that they must find ways to strengthen their region by standing together so as to become 'too big to fail'. Otherwise the financial market would get them. He was not suggesting copying the EU which was clearly not perfect but, learning from its experience they must create stronger regional organisations. And in their new treaties of regional cooperation they should include one simple thing: that when the market and human beings were clashing, human beings and fundamental social fairness must come first. If that was done he could see a world which George had described so beautifully that was 'too big to fail'. Globalisation would always be with us: not some other planet, but this planet Earth that with the new technology was now global. Together we had a unique chance to make our planet Earth progressive and 'solidaristic' under the continuing strong leadership of George Papandreou.

George Papandreou thanked Rasmussen for his kind words and solidarity, and said his mentioning the new technology was apt because we would now hear a Tunisian blogger, a young cyber activist, who had managed to expose the citizens' suffering caused by their own government, and their desire for democratic change. He congratulated her for representing both the youth and the emergence of women activists in the Arab world.

Amira Yahyaoui, Tunisian blogger, thanked the Socialist International for inviting her and said that she had expected to be in some little back room with other young people who wanted to change the world, and now here she was talking to a huge assembly of people who actually could change the world, because they were politicians, heads of government, and ministers.

Her country, she said, was a very small country where the Arab Spring revolution had begun and she hoped they would also have an Arab Summer to enjoy. A young man had set fire to himself and suddenly the whole country had risen up. When they had seen what was happening in the poorest city in Tunisia, with people risking certain death because the police were ready to kill them, they had known it was because their lives were miserable, they were unemployed and had far fewer opportunities than everyone else. Soon they had seen the slogans, when the dictator (whom they refused to call president) had left and one was: 'We prefer to drink water and eat bread than have Ben Ali as the president of Tunisia'. It had become quite clear that Tunisians wanted democracy, as it was discussed here and practiced in France; they wanted freedom but also justice and an end to the corruption in her country.

She said it was unfortunate that many of the western countries present at this meeting had kept those people in power. The Tunisian revolution had started around Christmas when she was living in France. She had rung all the media saying people were being killed on the streets, had sent them all the information and visual material and urged them to report this, but even the biggest French channel had mentioned nothing. Some journalists had said that around Christmas people wanted to know about traffic to the Alps, or what was selling in the shops, and that just three deaths in Tunisia was not really a great number.

She had been happy with the way things had happened in Egypt because the generals had been there with the people on the streets from the beginning, unlike in Tunisia. Since she was living in France she

had wanted to demonstrate against the arrival of the Tunisian Minister of Foreign Affairs who was visiting the Foreign Ministry in Paris just before Ben Ali went into exile. She was not criticising France but she had been stopped by the police and wondered why she was arrested in France, when she had not attacked the Minister nor tried to murder him.

She called on participants, who really had the power, to help Tunisians who did not have a neighbour like Israel or Egypt, nor the same history as Syria. It was a small country and Ben Ali had been in power for 25 years doing everything possible to prevent the people shining. Since it was not part of the geopolitical struggle, Tunisia could become a laboratory for Arab democracy; it had no military power and no Al Qaeda or terrorism, so it could succeed. She said she had heard a lot about the Islamists and the ever-present terrorist threat but it was that threat that had caused the insanity which kept Ben Ali in power: he was the anti-terrorist bulwark in Tunisia. But terrorists were in those countries where there was ignorance and poverty, so Tunisia really needed all the politicians and ministers present to help the country develop its economy and allow it to become a democratic beacon and example in the area. This, she said, was her main message.

Yahyaoui said she also wanted to bring the meeting up to date on what was developing right now. Tunisia was going through a transition period and since the fall of Ben Ali a transitional government had been appointed, initially with people who had previously held power. So this revolution of the young was being led by two men who were over 80 years old, which surely was not right. On October 23 they would vote for the Constitutional Assembly through which they would elect the parliament which would vote for a transitional president and perhaps next year they would have a president. At 26 years old she had never voted and never expected to, nor in fact to make it to that age, so she was extremely happy to be here but said it was essential that her country be helped economically. She hoped that participants would talk it over as Mr Talabani had said, and keep on inviting them to this forum.

On the role of women, she said Tunisian women were 'free': that is they were as free as the men, with the same rights, but no right to express themselves freely, so that was a kind of equality. There had been a lot of progress on women's rights and more to be made. They had a code that protected women; she thought they were the most protected women in the Arab world, but they wanted more: they wanted equality in marriage, in inheritance, in decision-making and in politics. Among more than 100 parties in Tunisia, she could think of only two or three led by women.

For the election of the Constitutional Assembly they had used a system that guaranteed equal presence of men and women on electoral lists, which was excellent and should guarantee at least a minimum presence of women in the Assembly even if most of the heads of those lists would be men. But with 30% of women elected to the Assembly that was surely not a negligible achievement. Every electoral list had to have 50% of women candidates, so now women were being invited to be on those lists, so even though it was a bit discriminative, it was not a bad thing because sometimes you needed to do good through what might probably be negative too. Quotas for women were a very good thing, she concluded.

George Papandreou thanked Amira, saying that to these powerful politicians, she had demonstrated her own power; that even in difficult times, Greece was very much committed to all the Arab Springs, and Summers too; and that Ben Ali might have done everything to prevent the Tunisian people from shining, but today she had brought a lot of light to this meeting and truly shone.

Tahar El Almi, Permanent Secretary of the MUP, Tunisia, said he would not talk about Tunisia because the Council had just heard all there was to hear, and had just seen 3000 years of Tunisia take the floor in front of them.

Concerning the movement he represented, the Socialist Party was the first opposition party set up in the '70s thanks to the unstinting support of European socialists, the Socialist International and the socialists of the European parliament. For twenty years it had functioned underground, had survived every vicissitude and now, having been the source of the revolution of January 14, was a structured party with the mission to respond to the social demands which had been totally unmet for more than 23 years and was now seeking active membership of the Socialist International.

Ben Ali, he continued, had followed the neo-liberal model to promote economic progress but had paid no attention to social justice, transparency, democracy or freedom. So the economic context had been positive, with a yearly increase in GDP, but the problem was the social context and the role of Ben Ali in this.

His party had asked for a group of experts to be established to draft a new Constitution, deleting all decrees and laws that had been introduced by Ben Ali and to put this Constitution to the people through a popular referendum. This had not been accepted by their partners so, as his compatriot had explained, there would be a Constitutional Assembly set up around the end of October which would prepare the Constitution. Meanwhile the country would not have a proper government for six months to a year, and this was the crux of the problem. His party would vote in the elections and take part in the Assembly but had chosen to be very prudent on that score, hoping there would be no further delays. There was increasing impatience on the streets and this impatience was the main factor in economic, social and political instability.

The MUP, he continued, was committed to a decentralised social economy in which economic efficiency and social justice were not incompatible. Increased social justice would create the conditions for greater economic efficiency which in turn would generate more wealth to further improve social justice. Their commitment was to a sustainable model in which economic efficiency and social justice complemented each other. Such a system must be based on the fair sharing of the fruits of growth, social protection, sustainable development, transparency and democracy. His party supported equality at every level: not just in electoral lists for parliamentary elections but also in the leadership of ministries. In this context he asked the Socialist International to support these efforts both morally and politically. Such support could be expressed through visits to Tunisia, and the MUP was inviting all the participants at this meeting to come to his country to see the situation for themselves and to judge their efforts to satisfy social demands as compared to other parties claiming the same ideology who were not listening to what was said on the streets. The MUP tried to be discreet and did not believe that making a lot of noise would help, but they did need support. Financial support would arise by itself, he said, if they followed the right path and had the support of the country, because investors were rational beings.

In asking for the SI's support, he said there had been too many demands by too many parties: for ten million Tunisians they had had just one party in the past; now they had over one hundred and growing. This was why he was inviting everyone to come and assess the situation and see if his party had earned the SI's support for their efforts.

Ahmed Ould Daddah, Mauritania, RFD, said that the Arab world covered about 15 million square kilometres from Oman on the Gulf to Mauritania on the shores of the Atlantic, with 337 million

inhabitants. Six months previously it had appeared to be a unified untroubled block languishing under a rather lethargic tyranny. Elsewhere in the world dictatorships might fall, but in the Arab world they seemed to have an iron grip based on profound cultural roots in Arab society and across the frontiers of Arab states, drawn mostly by colonial powers. These Arab regimes usually remained in power for 30 to 40 years; a military coup would lead to a government shared with comrades in arms and gradually would become a family dictatorship based on the power of the army and security forces, tolerated by foreign powers, and given a mask of legitimacy by the holding of occasional so-called elections. He thought this exercise of uninterrupted power over thirty or more years by dynastic tyrannical regimes was the most striking feature of the Arab world during the last five decades.

Some of these dictators would use their position in international fora, and the immense funds at their disposal after misappropriating the country's wealth, to annihilate even timid calls for democracy. This had happened also in Mauritania where Colonel Gaddafi had managed to clothe their military dictator in the robes of a democratically elected president, who was then able to strut the international stage discrediting democracy in the eyes of Arab citizens. This was then used as proof that the Arab mentality did not fit well with democracy, and both Arab regimes and their western protectors invoked the necessity to fight the Islamist terrorist threat as a pretext for the institutionalisation of dictatorship.

Libya, he continued, had used this pretext to defend its economic interests; other countries used geo-strategic arguments; and some anthropologists and intellectuals had even claimed that the Arab mentality required despotism, all this despite the long-standing democratic traditions throughout Arab history. So they offered the simplistic argument that the people needed bread, not freedom.

The liberation of Palestine and the occupied Arab territories was another excuse for some of doubtful faith to propagate martial law and dictatorship throughout the area. This seemed so embedded in the region that no one saw the coming fire of revolution throughout the Arab world, but as the poet-parliamentarian Ahmedou Ould Abdel Kader had said: miracles lie within the masses and out of oppression liberty is born. The Arab people now wanted to bring the regimes down, to disengage as the French would say. Starting with Tunisia and spreading rapidly to Egypt and other countries, freedom and dignity had now appeared in their political vocabulary and across society people were finding their own expressions of these democratic values. First they needed to be rid of the dictators; they needed to do what Tunisia and Egypt had done. He congratulated them and thanked the international community for its support to the Transitional Council of Libya and the movement there. He asked for equally firm support to the democratic aspirations in other Arab countries saying it was not just a moral requirement but a political necessity which would put paid to the argument that western governments only supported democracy when it served their own interests. His party urged the SI to stand by them and to apply pressure on the Yemeni and Syrian governments to withdraw from the streets and to allow the people to freely elect their governments. Once the dictators were gone the people would be better able to face the huge challenges that awaited them in replacing the remnants of dictatorial government with new leadership, and in fact finally ridding themselves of the ghost of dictatorship.

The heroic revolutionaries who, unprotected, had defied the guns had finally been supported by international public opinion and that support would help them confront the challenges of the future and establish an authentic and sustainable democracy. He hoped that the transitions in Egypt and Tunisia would be allowed a more realistic deadline for elections. If these two experiments were successful they would largely shape the future of democracy in the Arab world.

Support for those transitions and completing the work in other countries of the region including his own, was the roadmap we should follow, he said, because there were strategic objectives for this beautiful hope. Wars and conflicts in the Arab region were a clear threat to international peace and security: they also showed that democratic change, the Arab Spring, could resolve these long-standing conflicts. Obviously the continuing occupation of Iraq, the Golan Heights and southern Lebanon might push the search for democracy into second place, but the tensions and the very grave context in those areas would feed all types of violence. Resolving the Palestinian conflict and setting up a Palestinian state within the 1960 borders would allow the Arab Spring to cover the Arab world from border to border and was essential to the creation of a more stable and peaceful world.

The first session was declared closed. The Council would resume at 1500 hrs, continuing the discussion on freedoms, rights and hopes in the Arab World, and he invited the first speaker to take the floor.

Second session, afternoon

Fathi Mohammed Baja, Libya, Responsible for Foreign Affairs of the National Transitional Council, presented his Council's vision for rebuilding the state of Libya in response to the needs and aspirations of the people, incorporating the historic changes brought about by the revolution of February 17, and the defeat of the illegal Gaddafi regime. They had learned that there was no alternative but to build a free and democratic society and to ensure the supremacy of humanitarian law. They knew that this could only be done through dialogue, tolerance, cooperation, national cohesiveness and the active participation of all citizens, and not through terror and the violation of human rights. The past had taught them to respect the interests of everyone in their society and not to sacrifice one to another. They knew what it meant to be ruled by a dictator: now they sought a political authority based on the free will of the people.

This social contract, he continued, must lead to a civil society that recognized intellectual and political pluralism and allowed for the peaceful transfer of power through legal institutions and ballot boxes in accordance with a national Constitution endorsed by a people's referendum. He listed the principles that would guide their long march to freedom, which included the drafting of a national Constitution that would establish the necessary institutions, clarify the rights and obligations of citizens, separate and balance the legislative, executive and judicial branches of power, all premised on the rule of law, and adhere to the primacy of an independent judiciary. Every Libyan citizen of statutory age would be guaranteed the right to vote and to run for office; freedom of expression and of the press would be guaranteed, and the right of peaceful protest in such a way as to protect public security and social peace. The formation of political organisations, civil institutions and other peaceful associations was essential, and intellectual and political pluralism would be upheld to open the way for genuine political participation without discrimination.

His Council was calling for the nation's economy to be used for the benefit of the Libyan people by creating effective institutions to eradicate poverty, unemployment and inflation, and to work towards a prosperous society and a green environment. They sought to develop genuine economic partnerships between private and public sectors and an effective civil society to stand against corruption and waste. Science and technology must be used to the betterment of society encouraging culture, creativity, social rights, and the rights of women in all spheres.

They would establish a civil state, he continued, that respected the sanctity of religious doctrine and condemned the intolerance, extremism and violence manufactured by certain interests. They aspired to a state that respected the full human rights of every individual regardless of colour, gender, belief, ethnicity or social status.

Regarding the new Libya's regional and international relations, he said these would embody its democratic values and institutions. It would respect its neighbours, and the sovereignty of other states, would seek regional integration, and would cooperate with the international community to achieve international peace and security. The state would uphold the values of international justice, citizenship and humanitarian law, condemning dictatorial and fascist regimes, and it would join the international community in denouncing racism and discrimination. It would reject international terrorism and safeguard peace, democracy and freedom.

International treaties and agreements with other states would be respected, and efforts made to ensure international peace and security through cooperation and co-existence. In conclusion, he said the rights of foreign nationals and companies would be protected; immigration, residency and citizenship would be managed lawfully by civil institutions; and the sovereignty and free choice of other states and peoples would be respected.

Luis Ayala thanked the speaker and said a document would be presented for adoption by the Council that specifically referred to the courage of the Libyan people with whom we had felt a strong solidarity.

Kemal Kilicdaroglu, Turkey, CHP, said that the Arab Spring revolution that had begun in December had taken hold in Egypt, Libya, Bahrain, Yemen and Syria, shaking the whole Arab world. He expressed his party's admiration to the young activists who had spoken at this meeting. In order to understand this revolution, he said, it was critically important to study the unique history and conditions of the Middle East and northern Africa, and to evaluate from an economic point of view the current position and interaction with the rest of the world. The young Mohammed whose setting fire to himself had sparked a flame in the rest of the world had been drawing attention to world poverty. American workers demonstrating in Wisconsin, and labour riots in the Maldives and Burkina Faso, all shared common ground in demanding freedom and the rule of law. Since 2008 the middle class and labourers had been galvanised by cuts in welfare and the loss of hope among the lowest segments of society. In addition to economic oppression, he said, climate change was also a big threat that was strongly affecting the social inter-class struggle, and causing price increases in many basic food products, especially wheat.

Deteriorating social and economic conditions were challenging the middle class the most, he said, and the globalisation of the economy tended to erase class awareness. This would not happen easily but labourers had no reason to lose their optimism: the Arab Spring was an inspiring example of the courage of millions in the struggle for basic human rights and freedom from oppressive regimes. The SI should really understand and support the demands for democratisation by the fraternal and friendly Arab people.

If these aims could be accomplished without resulting in ethnic, religious and sectarian disputes then the fundamental transformation of the region could be enjoyed. Women, young people, labourers, minorities and the middle classes were demanding participatory representation, and these demands could be met by social structures supporting democracy, dialogue, fair distribution, and a secular culture. So the region provided a suitable environment for social democratic values and the organisation of parties.

He said that those who had chosen to intervene in Libya, possibly to protect their own interests, had caused the isolation of that country and the deaths of many innocent people, pushing NATO to exceed its purpose and adding another failure to its performance in Afghanistan. That significant organisation, of which some here were members, had an important and proven function to safeguard global peace, but had lost its standing with many non-member countries.

Regarding the critical developments in Syria, and having learned the lessons from Libya, he said responses should be developed to safeguard stability in the region. The Syrian administration should be directed to stop the use of violence, and to respond to the legal demands of the people. The SI too must give a hand to defend the struggle of the creators of the Arab Spring. He supported the objectives of freedom and equal rights with no hidden agendas. To this end, he urged the SI to increase opportunities to work with governments, political parties, and NGOs, and to build permanent ties with other parties or NGOs who might support the struggle.

The gates to a new era had just been opened by this crisis, he continued, and a regional awakening was taking place in the matrix of equality, freedom, justice and modernity forcing authoritarian regimes into a pluralistic parliamentary system. His party wished to see the demands for democratic reform met, and peace and democracy established in the region without further loss of life.

Concerning the Middle East, he said the entire international community should try to prepare the necessary psychological infrastructure in the region to overcome decades of prejudice and conflict, because peace could not be established until relations between Israel and Palestine were resolved. For the circle of bias to be broken there were challenging tasks that had to be undertaken by each side in order to achieve a solution that would enable Arabs and Jews to live in peace based on the boundaries of 1967.

In Turkey the results of the general elections in June had been formalised and submitted to MPs to certify their status in the Turkish Parliament. Eight of these elected parliamentarians, he said, were still under arrest, some already for more than 800 days. Their requests for release had been rejected on grounds that were in full breach of the European Court of Human Rights criteria. These MPs were not being permitted to take the necessary oath to enable them to start performing their duties according to the will of the electorate. Although MPs in Turkey had judicial immunity, this was unavailable to them because the litigation proceedings against them had preceded their election. He described the various court decisions that kept the eight deputies from fulfilling their parliamentary duties, in violation of the UNHR Committee, and the Convention on Civil Rights.

Social democrats, he concluded, had the duty to create a new world and not to flinch in that struggle, following the example of Rosa Luxembourg in efforts to rise above the inevitable obstacles that tried to keep us from our rights and from freedom. We had to be ever stronger against injustice, unfairness and abuse. We had been the voice of the desperate, the tortured, the imprisoned and the exiled. The Turkish socialists would always be committed to that struggle.

Abderrahman Lamrani, Morocco, USFP, first expressed his party's solidarity and support to the Greek comrades in these difficult times.

His party's Secretary General had been unable to travel to Athens due to a referendum being held in Morocco for a new Constitution, a turning-point in his country's long struggle to achieve democratic

representation. The values of democracy and social justice upheld for 120 years by the Socialist International were now taking root in the Arab world, he said. All the progressive and democratic movements across the world were watching this historic effort to establish a state of law and social justice, not knowing how developments might unfold.

Their contribution as political actors would enhance this process and allow the human rights of millions of people in the Arab world to triumph. The new social media, inspired by the desire of many generations to put paid to authoritarian rule, had played an important mobilising role: they were finally putting an end to Arab pessimism and advancing the political principles of our time. But as one Arab magazine had said, it was not just a Facebook revolution: it was primarily a massive youth movement, open, contemporary and determined not to be stifled. Frustration with the lack of economic development, the flagrant social inequities, and also the role played by the international community, had added thrust to this demand for dignity.

The regional dimension, he continued, should not disguise the varying degrees of intensity in the struggle depending on the colonial experience, geographical position and economic prospects, all of which would impact their respective capacities to make it successfully through the current phase. Their demands were essentially political, rejecting authoritarianism and requiring a constitution, modern democratic institutions and respect for fundamental human rights.

The Arab Spring, he said, also refutes all claims that condemned the region to either authoritarian or fundamentalist regimes. On behalf of the Arab people, he asserted that what happened in their region would have consequences in the wider world, including the resolution of the Palestinian question. Our organisations should play their full part in speeding up that process which had implications for peace in the rest of the world.

Lamrani said his party had supported the demonstrations known as the 20th of February Movement which included the Young Socialists and whose demands were in line with everything they had been seeking since their foundation in 1978. A new draft Constitution was being voted on which his party considered one further step towards the lawful democratic state that had been their goal in recent decades. It would enshrine civil rights and freedoms, guarantee social and gender equality and the separation of powers, and ensure that all internationally recognised human rights be respected.

They knew that these changes required time and perseverance, but also great support from democratic and progressive forces and especially from the Socialist International. The changes brought a favourable element to the Euro-Mediterranean partnership which was a key factor in the democratic transitions south of the Mediterranean. Europe must reconcile itself with the Mediterranean, he said, taking into account all the implications of the financial and economic crisis which had highlighted our vulnerability. Moroccans would coordinate their efforts to create a common future worthy of the aspirations of coming generations. In closing he urged optimism and strong cooperation to overcome the challenges facing some countries of the region, and to ensure the establishment of peace, human rights, democracy and social justice throughout the Arab region.

Jieyi Liu, China, said this day was the 90th anniversary of the founding of his party. China had been a semi-feudal, semi-colonial society when 50 founding members had met together dedicated to achieving national independence, liberation of the people, and putting China on the correct development path. It had seemed an impossible task but once the people were engaged progress had been unstoppable. The party now had 80 million members and had taken China to an economic, political, cultural and social

level of development never seen before. The country of course faced important challenges and they were aware of the hard work that reaching their objectives would require. Further reforms were needed in various aspects of governance in order to make China a prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced and harmonious modern socialist society. For the next five years their economy was expected to grow at 7% a year and the people's income even faster, and in that time they expected their imports to reach a total volume of eight trillion US dollars from the international community. They were committed to saving resources, cutting emissions and expanding forest coverage to build an environment-friendly society and to extending the social safety net for the whole population. His party attached great importance to exchanges and cooperation with all other political parties and organisations.

Since 2004, he continued, his party had established a mechanism for strategic dialogue with the Socialist International and had discussed global and regional issues. He was grateful for the benefits the SI's thinking had brought.

He referred to the complex dynamics and daunting challenges for the countries in West Asia and North Africa, and said China had always been their traditional friends. He believed the people should be supported in finding their own solutions and we should be confident that they would do so. No matter how deeply entrenched the tensions, fundamental and lasting solutions could only be found through peaceful political means. As had been said by earlier speakers, the international community should support constructive efforts towards nation-building and economic development.

The Palestinian issue was at the core of the Middle East problem, he continued, and current negotiations were at a critical stage. His party hoped the countries involved would take constructive steps with the international community to move towards a solution on the basis of the UN Security Council resolutions and the principle of land for peace. He hoped the Palestinian people would achieve statehood soon so that the people of the region could live together in peace and stability.

Finally he wished to mention the big lesson we needed to draw from natural disasters. He expressed China's sympathy with the Japanese people and government in the three-dimensional tragedy of earthquake, tsunami and nuclear problems. China had provided assistance and would continue to do so, but the collective international community needed to recognise that the whole of humanity was a community of common destiny. We needed to cooperate in efforts to resolve problems and seek win-win solutions rather than zero-sum concepts.

Pia Locatelli, President of SIW, SI Vice-President, added her thanks to all the other expressions of appreciation to PASOK and the Greek comrades and said that SIW held the highest esteem, solidarity and affection for President Papandreou.

She said that with so many parts of the world experiencing difficulties it was clear that a complete change was needed: we had not only to humanise globalisation, but to humanise the whole world. Our attention was currently on the Arab region, the rejection of dictatorship and the demands for democracy. The Socialist International Women's Council had discussed the extreme bravery of the demonstrators in the events of the past half-year which were full of both tragedy and hope as Professor Makram Ebeid had said. Hope for change and the courage to take action were the impetus for this movement and we must not let them down as we had been blind for so long. Despite early warnings, the Arab Spring had taken the world by surprise, and this was a shame because we had known about the lack of press freedom, the oppression of minorities, the persecution of dissidents, the corruption and

nepotism, but had chosen not to see. The patriarchal organisation of society kept women in a subordinate position, if not totally segregated, and it was the people's uprising that had paid for our blinkers. We were indebted to them.

The chain had spread easily from Tunisia right across North Africa thanks to the initiative and technological abilities of the young who had bypassed the traditional channels at the expense of the authorities. It was mainly young people who had sparked the trigger but women of every generation had joined in, playing different roles, speaking and assisting wounded fighters. Although the Arab Spring had not arisen as a call for gender equality, she said, democracy and women's rights went hand in hand. There were no women in the Saudi Arabian parliament; none in Qatar, and none in Oman. In the Yemeni parliament there was 0.3, that is one per 300, in Bahrain 2.5, in Iran 2.8, and in Lebanon 3.1. Women had been present from the beginning in these movements but this was not reflected in the provisional institutions preparing the new architecture. Once again women were being left out even though they had paid a high human cost. There were no women in the Egyptian council to reform the Constitution. She had brought this up with Amr Moussa, Secretary General of the League of Arab States and Egyptian presidential candidate, after he had made a speech in the European parliament with which she could entirely agree except that there was no mention of women, so half of the subject had been completely absent. He had responded that they would of course think of women in the future! But one million Italian women had used the mantra "If not now, when?" in demonstrating against Berlusconi for insulting women: that was indeed the question.

SIW, she continued, had therefore put forward some proposals to deal with this exclusion which socialists, women and men, had been fighting against for over one hundred years. First, to support the fight of Arab women for democracy and equality in the democratic transition process and in future institutions; thus political empowerment. Second, economic empowerment by helping Arab women to build alliances and bridges within the Arab world, so as to ensure a democracy that promotes the empowerment of women in the economy through the creation of jobs, and in every sphere including government, because socio-economic development and democracy go hand in hand. Third, we must support all social and political forces that demand a secular state and encourage the creation of new rules and institutions to preserve religious diversity and respect religious minorities.

Before concluding, she wished to mention two other resolutions passed by SIW: one drawing attention to the courage of women in Saudi Arabia who had defied the authorities' ban on their driving. They appeared to be gaining some favour; and another expressing support for a campaign to award the Nobel Peace Prize 2011 to African women, a collective Nobel to formally recognise the forgotten role that women play in African life. This campaign had been promoted by an Italian NGO which coordinated 50 international solidarity-based associations and had the support of Michelle Bachelet, leading UN Women and the President of Liberia. She hoped this new idea of a collective Nobel Prize would succeed.

Finally she expressed gratitude for a resolution presented by the Socialist International to mark the centennial of celebrating the 8th of March as International Women's Day. The cry of Italian women, Arab women, and all the women of the world was "If not now, when?" and of course the Italian women's reply was "Now".

Luis Ayala thanked Pia Locatelli and welcomed the large and inspiring presence of women at this meeting. In addition to revolutions in the Arab world he drew attention to the very strong part the SI was playing in the struggle for democracy in Africa where many SI member parties were now in government: Alpha Condé President of Guinea, and our Vice-President Mahamadou Issoufou, President

of Niger, were the most recently elected in that continent. He then welcomed the President of the SI Committee on Africa.

Ousmane Tanor Dieng, First Secretary of the Socialist Party of Senegal, SI Vice-President, congratulated Prime Minister Papandreou on his courage and energy in such difficult circumstances and expressed solidarity and confidence that he would succeed in his efforts for socialists and democrats in Greece and throughout the world.

He congratulated the SI President and Secretary General for inviting the main players in what was happening across northern Africa because they had been able to express here, as nowhere else, what they expected from the international community and from the Socialist International in particular. This they had done remarkably well and their enthusiasm was encouraging. They had explained how these events had arisen, since no one had been expecting them even a short time before. He thought the world would continue to be surprised at how quickly our children had learned to manage the new technologies and use them for purposes we had been pursuing for years.

In Senegal, he continued, there were young university graduates who had to work as street vendors because there were no jobs. He thought this was the country's biggest problem and it seemed to be the general rule to different degrees in the Arab world, and throughout Africa. Everywhere heads of government were clinging on to power but did not carry out their responsibilities, some even transferring power and money to their heirs. Similar things could be seen throughout the continent. In theory it might be good to deal with the particular challenges of each country, but he thought we should also take a more comprehensive view and learn from the Arab world, not forgetting that when we speak of Libya, Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt we were also describing the African reality. For instance, an Arab country such as Mauritania had Senegal as its closest neighbour. He recommended a comprehensive view because the same solutions we had been offering the Arab region could be used by countries to the south.

He reminded the meeting of what had happened in Africa in the '90s when national conferences had appeared to lead the way towards democracy, rejecting authoritarian rule and offering reforms and hopes of democratic freedoms. What they did not have was support from the international community, so dictators had quickly adjusted to the new context, and regularly organised sham elections whose results were known in advance, so these so-called democracies were a source of political and social instability. It was essential that the international community and the SI stand by the efforts now being made, or else the forces of darkness would take over from the dictators. He thought the SI was indeed doing its part and he was very grateful to Luis Ayala for having invited these young people to report on the situation in the Arab world because sometimes the media did not give a clear picture.

There were still many questions to be asked, he continued. The Ivory Coast was currently in the eye of a post-election storm, and the SI had member parties which had many problems, so we had to see exactly what the international community could do and not close our eyes: we had responsibilities. For forty years we had known that Qaddafi was a dictator, we had known what was happening in Tunisia, and in Egypt where elections were being won with 95% of votes in favour. But there were strategic interests and privileged relationships being pursued. We must now support the people who were struggling in Libya, in Yemen and in Syria and not avert our eyes because of geo-strategic considerations.

Turning to his own country, known for its democratic traditions, he said Senegal had elected the President of the Republic in a transparent democratic way in 2000, but now found him making sure no

one else could challenge him. In eleven years they had had some six prime ministers and the President had made 18 changes to the Constitution for partisan purposes, had offered amnesty to political assassins, and devised a system to ensure that his family retained power through the reciprocal appointment of presidents and vice-presidents. Senegal now had people working through the social media and had made the President withdraw his latest draft bill. They intended to stand firm knowing that his intention was to take Senegal back to the past. He would win the presidency and the vice-presidency with only 25% of the vote, which was nothing, and would set the country back several generations. Young people could not accept this and had taken to the streets to try to prevent it. He urged the international community to see what was happening now in Senegal as a kind of democratic test-case in what might happen in other countries of the region. There were dictators throughout Africa but the people had reached a turning point and nothing could stop them. He hoped the Socialist International would take up this challenge and support the people in order to make sure that democracy would take root also in Senegal.

Sergey Mironov, Russia, A Just Russia Party, said his delegation was pleased that the agenda included really vital topics relating to the SI's position on important international issues. Since the last meeting in Paris, the world had seen great political events and serious challenges to the international community with the Arab Spring which had entirely changed the situation in the Middle East and North Africa. The short to medium-term effects might be negative for the development of world politics, but he believed that an important contribution to this process could be made by the SI. Russian socialists welcomed the SI's decision to expel the parties from Tunisia and Egypt and believed that the SI should be clear in defining its position on Libya, advocating a peaceful solution and rejecting outside military intervention. He thought that combined efforts to support democratic forces in their search for peace could lead to more free, fair and humane societies where democracy could thrive.

Commending the Japanese people's bravery in facing the tragic consequences of the disaster in March, he said two questions arose: what to do about the peaceful use of atomic energy; and how to effectively confront large-scale disasters both natural and man-made at the international level. There were opposing opinions concerning the first question, one response being to ban nuclear energy by 2020. But this seemed too simplistic since nuclear power was a low-carbon energy source with important potential in combating climate change. According to the IAEA nuclear power accounted for 14% of the world's electricity in 2010 and that share was now significantly reduced. Although the attempt to deal with the problems on their own deserved our respect, accidents affecting such large numbers of people and countries required an international response, the mechanism for which had not yet been formed, but which must be the United Nations' and the IAEA's prerogatives. Serious international monitoring of nuclear power plants from a geological point of view was also needed.

His party believed the SI should continue to work actively in these areas, as in the proposals made by its Commission on sustainable development concerning a global fund for the prompt and effective international response to global, environmental and technological disasters.

In light of developments in recent months he called on the SI to continue to act when some parties deviated from its core values and to carry on defending the interests and rights of the working people. The ideological and political principles faced in light of contemporary reality could be strengthened.

He urged the SI also to be more hands-on in its work with democratic parties of the BRIC countries and in new political movements in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

In closing, he said the SI had the potential to remain the most effective international organisation of socialist and social democratic parties, and he wished it every success.

Julião Mateus Paulo, Angola, MPLA, SI Vice-President, said that Greece was always mentioned in connection with the economic crisis, but a positive example was being given to us by George Papandreou and the Greek people, an example of persistence, confidence and the fight for a bright future, and it was in this spirit of struggling for peace and democracy that we were meeting to discuss the situation in the Middle East and North Africa. The popular revolts that were being called the Arab Spring had arisen through the peoples' claims for more freedom and democracy, reform of institutions, more job opportunities, a better distribution of the national wealth and the fight against corruption. Although the causes were basically the same in the various countries, the response of the European countries had been completely different, sometimes appealing for dialogue and negotiation, as in Yemen, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, and in other cases, especially Libya, communicating through bombs and bloodshed to persuade the citizens to abandon their country and their demands for those same rights. Under the cover of United Nations Security Council resolution 1973 establishing the no-fly zone, a fierce war had ensued with thousands of civilians killed every day, infrastructure completely destroyed, and thousands of citizens forced to become refugees. This resolution, he charged, was being enforced beyond the initial spirit and its supporters were insensitive to negotiating a resolution of the conflict and a peaceful transition.

Events in the Mediterranean Basin reminded us of the discussion on reforming the UN system when the SI had suggested strengthening the multilateral mechanisms and dialogue, respect for differences, and the pursuit of peaceful conflict-resolution. And yet regional organisations such as the African Union were being completely ignored along with any initiatives to find political solutions through negotiation. His party was worried by the trend in the UN Security Council to place itself actively in favour of one of the parties to the conflict, thus negating the traditional concept of maintaining peace through neutrality at the UN.

The main problem in the Middle East, he said, was undoubtedly the conflict between Palestine and Israel with whom we had been promoting dialogue in order to find a lasting solution by encouraging the existence of two independent states with proper borders capable of guaranteeing peace, stability and good neighbourliness. There were two new and positive elements that could encourage the resumption of direct peace negotiations, one being the reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah, and the other the remarks made by US President Obama that a future Palestinian state would be based on the 1967 borders. The two parties to the conflict must each make some painful concessions in order to achieve the lasting solution their people aspired to.

The world, he continued, was experiencing profound transformations, some of which might appear to be setbacks for the SI, and as defenders of peace, and a permanent democratic dialogue, we could not remain indifferent. While we must encourage dialogue between governments and the people as a mechanism for democratic interaction, it was also democratic to understand that all people are free to choose a suitable model for their socio-cultural values in line with the universal values of a democratic society.

This new environment would demand some reforms in our organisation, some creative way to rescue the ideas we had outlined for multilateral organisations, especially the United Nations, and a more dynamic cooperation between our organisations. The current challenges required a stronger and more

active SI, reformulated in its methods and very clear in its objectives concerning world-wide issues. The MPLA would be fully committed to this process.

Carlos Carnero, Spain, PSOE, said the Arab Spring was excellent news for socialists because it showed that the ideals of democracy, human rights, the rule of law and morality in politics still mobilised people during this era of globalisation. It allowed us to see countries that had appeared to be condemned to totalitarianism trying to find their own model of democracy with rules that are universal and interdependent. What happened in Tunisia and Egypt was very important for democracy and we must ensure that the regime in Libya ceased its crimes against humanity, and that Syria and Yemen halted their brutal repression.

The United Nations, he continued, had shown determination in responding to the Arab Spring, and the European Union was again at the forefront with efforts to create stability, peace and progress in the Mediterranean region. The new Union for the Mediterranean proposed by the European Commission and supported by the Council of Ministers recently in Brussels, showed that cooperation between the two shores of the Mediterranean would be implemented according to the principles first decreed in the Barcelona process.

A task force had been set up for the southern Mediterranean by the European Union and the Special Representative would be a Spaniard, Spain being at the very forefront in supporting democracy and the Euro-Mediterranean partnership. The Arab Spring had now become a priority for the international community and they had visited Tunis when all this was starting and had been giving advice and technical aid to support the establishing of democratic institutions in Egypt and Tunisia, and to protect Libyan citizens from crimes against humanity.

He pointed out that Libya and Iraq were two completely different cases, and we should not view them as part of something similar. The war in Iraq was immoral. What was happening in Libya was the fruit of international illegality with maximum implications for the United Nations. Europeans should take an active part in these operations under the auspices of the UN, and the Socialist International should be out there supporting the Arab Spring which would in turn become an Arab Summer, Autumn and Winter and would surely help to create the kind of Arab world with which we all wanted to work.

Mohamed Sidati, Western Sahara, Polisario, paid tribute to the thousands of people in the Arab world who in recent months had found the path to democracy and social justice through peaceful struggle, personal sacrifice and even martyrdom. He expressed support to all those still fighting for democracy because sooner or later freedom would finally arrive also in Western Sahara which had lived for many years under foreign occupation.

Since 2010 his party had been following events in northern Africa including the terrible violence in Libya and Syria, and the self-immolation in Tunis which had sparked the uprising and succeeded in overturning the regime of Ben Ali. He saluted the different social groups in the popular movement in Egypt that had managed to oust the Mubarak regime, and the rest of the Arab people who, like his party, were struggling for their freedom.

There was nothing in the world, he continued, that would remain as it had been because people had learned that they were citizens with their own rights, and despite violent repression, arrests and even death, people had lost their fear and were finally expressing themselves freely. The whole series of

changes throughout the Arab world showed that dictatorships were no longer the synonym of stability nor a bulwark against the extension of radical Islam across the Arab countries.

In the Western Sahara they were protesting peacefully against the repression that the world had been ignoring for years. The problem was decolonisation and the solution would be respect for self-determination as enshrined in UN resolutions and in the jurisprudence on decolonisation described in the text of the African Union. They had held their biggest peaceful protest in November demanding the same rights that many Arab people were fighting for: social justice, employment, freedom and self-determination. The first wave of protest had started with the Saharawi people but their camp had been violently dismantled and Moroccan occupation forces had driven the people away. The human rights violations were terrible, with torture, houses burned and shops destroyed, and yet a text had just been signed between the EU and Morocco.

He asked people not to forget that the first spark shaking up the Arab world had begun with them. The UN Secretary General had said that there were new challenges for the Western Sahara, and many voices were demanding constitutional change in Morocco but nothing had happened. Friends in Morocco said that only democratisation would end the illegal occupation of Western Sahara and respect for the people's rights to self-determination. He hoped that the changes in the Arab world would spread to their corner and be supported by the international community to have a positive impact on his people's struggle for freedom. The Arab Spring would thus not be just another season. He urged the Socialist International to be more active, recognising that dictatorship no longer meant stability, nor the security of financial interests of other countries. The SI should renew itself with policies like those of Willy Brandt and Olof Palme, offering more solidarity in defence of democracy and human rights. In conclusion he said the protestors in the Arab world should be considered our partners through our shared principles and values, and the SI's commitment of solidarity must be seen in support for the struggle of the people of the region, who had simply one objective: dignity, peace, respect and self-determination.

Ebrahim Ebrahim, South Africa, ANC, said his party, even when they had been in exile, had always supported the struggle of people who were under foreign occupation, such as in East Timor, in Palestine, in Cyprus and of course in Western Sahara. He added that the ANC had taken a decision to include 50% representation by women in all its structures from parliament down to local government. At times it was not possible to guarantee outcomes and only 40% of Cabinet ministers were women, but South Africa was setting a good example for the continent of Africa, for Arab countries and for the rest of the world.

He pointed out that much less had been heard about Bahrain than about other countries involved in the Arab Spring, and this was presumably due to the American fleet being there. As a member of the Security Council, his government had supported the expulsion of Libya from the Human Rights Commission and strongly condemned the acts of violence by the Libyan government. The matter had gone to the Security Council and its resolution 1970 included an arms embargo which the ANC fully supported. They had voted for resolution 1973 imposing a no-fly zone because, firstly, they wanted to protect civilians particularly in Benghazi where airpower might be used, and secondly, to help get humanitarian assistance into the conflict zone. At the same time they had joined in an African Union resolution appointing an ad-hoc committee of five African presidents, including Jacob Zuma, to seek a peaceful solution through negotiation and dialogue. Libya was an African country and needed an African solution. They had been very disappointed in the way western countries had interpreted that meeting separately from the resolution, and indeed had abused that resolution. The ANC had been criticised domestically and in the rest of the continent for supporting the UN resolution. Their intention

had been to protect civilians and yet they found that western countries had their own agenda which was for regime-change, and civilians were being killed in the bombing of Tripoli and of Gaddafi's compound.

He described his party's efforts to arrange a peaceful dialogue between the government of Gaddafi and the TNC, and to create an exit for Gaddafi. The TNC had at first agreed with the AU's roadmap but then the whole process appeared to have moved to Europe and the USA, and the AU was ignored. He expressed concern that this affected the credibility of the Security Council: under cover of the UN resolution, arms were being parachuted in and no one knew who would get hold of them. The five African presidents had issued a strong statement condemning NATO for its actions in Libya.

His party was appealing to the international community, to Gaddafi's government, the TNC and NATO for a ceasefire monitored by the AU, the Arab League and the international community and to begin a dialogue towards democratisation. The experience with the resolution on Libya was the reason for reluctance to accept a resolution on Syria that the western powers wanted. He urged the SI to speak out strongly on the need to adhere to the letter and the spirit of Security Council resolutions, and to give the AU the opportunity to deal with the Libyan situation which was an African crisis in an African country that the African Union had the capability to resolve.

Vittorio Craxi, Italy, PS, said we socialists from all over the world once again had to answer questions on the role of our SI. With all the changes happening we had to deal with new events; having been in the vanguard we were now at the tail end. In the last century we had supported the transition of countries from communism to more democratic systems, following our ideals and convictions. Now with changes in the Arab world we had to reconsider our past behaviour. Although it was not the West's fault that repressive regimes had taken root in those countries, there had been a clear divide between the West and the world of Osama bin Laden, and we had been unable to reject certain regimes that did side with the West hoping we could respect those dictators' promises to slowly but surely democratise their societies. Now it was the people of Egypt, Tunisia and Libya who were ready to organise the democratisation and it was the leaders who were resisting in order to retain power. We democratic countries might say we welcomed into our club those friends who were moving towards democracy, but then we had also to welcome the democratic inferno because our democracies were not neatly ruled by legislative, executive and judicial powers but were accompanied by powerful and irresponsible financial institutions and media.

George Papandreou had clearly asked for a calm force to stand up against aggression and use right-wing tools to correct a situation caused by a right-wing government. Our biggest challenge, he said, was to see how to deal with the attacks of financial institutions, not only against Greece but also other Mediterranean friends, from right-wing forces who had not understood the challenges of our friends in the Arab world.

There were topical questions that would demand our social democratic response, such as how to reconnect production and employment; how to align the needs of the poorest with those who had the know-how to help; and how to bring together our fragmented societies. These issues had been raised by events in the Arab world and if we were unable to respond to the challenges those transitions would become more fragile. If we did not take great care to support those societies economically and socially we would not reap the benefits. The SI, he said, should play a central role in shaping an overall vision for the Mediterranean with the right financial and social rules.

Craxi said the question of a ceasefire in Libya had to be decided. The UN resolution had been interpreted rather freely and there was no clear mandate either internationally or for Gaddafi. We needed to see how the international community could settle such questions, always using force only as a last resort.

In concluding, he said on behalf of Italian socialists that Europe must renew its commitment to the people of the southern shores of the Mediterranean and to a new, definitive peace process; we must commit to settling the Palestinian issue while guaranteeing the security of Israel; and we must make one of our priorities to help the millions of men and women living under terrible conditions as refugees and immigrants.

Johann Hassel, IUSY, said we were witnessing a democratic revolution in North Africa and the Middle East because young people had decided they were strong enough to bring about change and that human rights and democracy could not be rejected. But the road from revolution to reform was long. Every organisation of the SI could play a constructive role in the constitutional reform needed to bring about a vibrant civil society. Economic and social development were part of the call, not simply the right to vote, but that voting must lead to progress in education, health-care and other benefits of social democracy. He agreed that the protestors had little reason to thank the West and especially the European Union which had helped to keep the authoritarian regimes alive. We had to be somewhat self-critical in these discussions to ensure that we were always on the right track concerning human rights and democratisation.

As politicians, he continued, we were responsible for creating public opinion, and even if our parties were in opposition, that too was a part of democracy and an opportunity to influence change. We could prove to conservatives that authoritarian regimes were no guarantee of stability compared to democratisation, human rights and economic and social equality. When people had the freedom to choose they would make the right choices.

Where human rights and democracy had been rejected, as in Western Sahara, people were demonstrating but not being listened to. It was time for the SI to re-affirm its position on Western Sahara and for the holding of a referendum.

Morocco and Polisario must be encouraged into deep negotiations to find a peaceful and lasting solution so as to give the younger generation the chance to create their future. He pointed out that as long as we were not supporting them we were actually opposing them, and we did not want to be doing that.

The Middle East and especially Israel and Palestine were in our hearts, and whereas people said it was a very complex conflict, he said it was easy: two peoples living side by side in freedom, security, independence and prosperity. Certainly the road was long and difficult but we could play a progressive role as we had in re-affirming our resolution. It was a matter of political will and the fact of the Israeli government's apartheid-like policies that were infringing on the freedom of speech of journalists and thus down-grading democracy in Israel. We could be encouraged by Fatah and Hamas joining together. Women's rights had to be respected in Gaza and we could be part of the strengthening of democratisation by influencing public opinion and seeing that a solution could be reached only if we demanded it.

In concluding, he agreed with President Papandreu on the need for a global democratic system. We were indeed strong enough to find peaceful solutions, to claim democracy also in financial systems, to

promote equality and economic and social development, and we were strong enough to reform our International.

Zharmakhan Tuyakbay, Kazakhstan, Azat, Co-Chair of the Nationwide Social Democratic Party, said that the Arab Spring had demonstrated the harm and the fatality of authoritarian systems for any country's development. The longer the ideologists of constant power tried to retain this form of government, the more tragic the end for both governors and citizens. In his country this issue was becoming more topical every day. Like other countries with rich stocks of natural resources, Kazakhstan was also overtaken by the so-called 'oil curse'. Not only was his country's economy 80% dependent on the export of natural resources, but in gaining its independence from the Soviet Union an authoritarian regime had strangled the early stages of democratic institutions such as parliamentarianism, civil society, an independent court system and free mass media. As a result, natural resources had been privatised and the whole economy had been taken over by the group who had seized power; state social commitments had been minimised; and there was inequality, a highly corrupt government and outrageous property stratification. About 80% of the Kazakhstani people now lived at or below the poverty line. All of this had its roots in the developed countries' huge interests in Kazakhstan's natural resources which the rulers were making available to their own benefit and by ignoring issues of human rights and democracy. The real tragedy was seeing highly educated Kazakhstan, with its potential for democratic development, moving away from the path of global progress built on freedom and justice.

The events in the Arab world, he continued, demonstrated the consequences of double standards in democratic issues, and the mistaken belief of western politicians that authoritarian regimes were a bulwark of stability, his country also being viewed in that light. Authoritarian power in Kazakhstan had put on a façade of democracy, throwing an occasional sop to certain social groups and deliberately substituting populism for state responsibility and the encouragement of human self-expression. The government was still deluding and dividing its citizens and the international community, which brought great danger of destabilisation. Populist demagoguery was covering outrageous anti-democratic and anti-social governance and spreading out to other members of the CIS. He was convinced that the post-Soviet political systems were hampering the advancement of genuine social justice and democracy.

Events in the Arab world set new challenges for the Socialist International, as a global organisation, to promote its values all over the world and to foster the rejection of authoritarianism. Places where ideas of genuine freedom and fairness were absent would be filled with deceitful surrogates leading millions of people to despair, penury and illegality.

His party unceasingly struggled for the realisation of democracy and a socially responsible state and it was no exaggeration to say that their work was on the edge of confrontation between power and the people, between labour and capital. They had wide public support and more than 120 thousand members because their aim was for fairness. He was confident that democratic values would succeed in his country and other post-Soviet countries, but this would happen faster and with fewer tragic events only if the global progressive community, including the SI, would give moral support and full-scale cooperation. The experience of the Arab Spring gave us more reasons to value our cohesion, and genuine hope that dictatorial regimes would become political anachronisms. We were facing, he concluded, a new era of democracy, freedom and justice.

Carlos Vieira da Cunha, Brazil, PDT, SI Vice-President, thanked PASOK for their hospitality and expressed confidence that the Greek people would prevail over the current crisis. He reminded participants that for six months now Brazil had a woman president and the Dilma administration's main priority, and

greatest challenge, was the eradication of extreme poverty. Thanks to President Lula's social policies 28 million Brazilians had finally been lifted out of poverty, inequality had decreased, and a new middle class had emerged feeding a virtuous circle of economic growth and job creation. For many years Brazil had been creating an average of 200,000 new jobs per month, and between January and April of 2011 had generated more than 880,000 formal jobs. Wages had had a real gain of 6.7% in the last 12 months, so they could proudly say they had improved many social and economic indicators. Despite these advances there were still 16 million Brazilians enduring extreme poverty, managing to live on less than US\$1.50 per day. President Dilma had launched a four-year programme called "Brazil without Poverty" which she was absolutely determined would succeed. Seventy-six percent of the poorest Brazilians lived in the north and northeast of the country, and 71% were black. Brazil was finally rescuing these forgotten people through a comprehensive programme including a social welfare programme of family allowances, the Bolsa Familia; the building of two million affordable homes; and a quarterly payment, the Bolsa Verde, to each poor family that lives in forest areas if they commit to the preservation of the environment. So Brazil was doing its work for a more egalitarian world.

Referring to the austerity programmes imposed by the IMF on Greece and other countries, he recalled that in the '90s Brazil had appealed to the IMF for help: cuts in public spending and sacrifices applied to Brazilian workers had not solved the problems, in fact the country had stalled, and unemployment and inequality had increased. It was only when Brazil had been freed of the shackles of the IMF and the government had decided to rule with social sensitivity that things had improved. Even though each country had its own characteristics, it was indisputable that we had common principles and universal values that united us in one political family. Bound together in pride by the universal values of socialism, we advocated the primacy of labour over capital and were ideologically committed to standing up for workers and their rights. These had been among the principles, values and commitments of the Frankfurt Congress in 1951 and he hoped this Council meeting would reassert our principles and never forget the cause of socialism.

Luis Ayala, announcing the discussion of the Middle East, reminded participants that the SI had been engaged for many years in the pursuit of dialogue and peace between our Palestinian and Israeli members. The Council meeting in Santo Domingo had adopted an important resolution in 2009 and again in New York in 2010 after very informed debates. In June the SI had held productive meetings in Tel Aviv and in Ramallah, where they had also met President Mahmoud Abbas, and had produced a statement agreed by our four member parties, two from Israel and two from Palestine. The emphasis had been on negotiation as a priority, Palestinian statehood, and promoting a new agenda of SI involvement. We had welcomed the process of renewal in the Israel Labour Party, and an initiative of Palestinian reconciliation that should bear fruit in institutions representing all the Palestinian people. As always with the Middle East, this was a period of many challenges but also new opportunities which we must seize. The rebuilding of the peace camp in Israel and the search for ways to move towards Palestinian statehood were both reflected in our support for that initiative.

Second theme: MAKING PEACE A REALITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST: THE PURSUIT OF PALESTINIAN STATEHOOD WITH SECURE AND RECOGNISED BORDERS FOR ISRAEL AND PALESTINE

Nabil Shaath, Palestine, Fatah, expressed gratitude to the SI and admiration for President George Papandreou and his country. He said he had been thrilled by the Arab Spring, and especially by the peaceful revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia which were an inspiring demonstration of what Arab youth could do. He pointed out that in the last 50 years both Eastern Europe and Latin America had arisen

against dictators and moved to democracy, freedom, human rights and efforts towards prosperity. He particularly admired Latin American leaders, many of whom had survived years in jail: now it was the turn of the Arab people.

The demonstrators, he continued, had tried hard to abide by the slogans of 'silmiya' meaning 'peaceful' but had been forced to fight back in Libya, Yemen and Syria. Their attempts to use open sources and open spaces through only peaceful means had re-inspired the Palestinian people, the original users of such methods in the 1987 intifada.

The representatives of the Arab Spring who had spoken at this meeting, he said, were calling for exactly the same aims that the SI stood for, and he asked what the SI was prepared to do to help them, especially in the difficult period after the change, both economically and in restoring security, the rule of law, new institutions and new constitutions. He hoped this meeting would come up with concrete suggestions of help for the Arab Spring.

Change was inevitable throughout the Arab world and this was an opportunity for the many countries facing Europe across the Mediterranean and in African and Asian nations, to adopt the principles of the SI. Palestine had suffered from the same deprivation of their rights by a foreign occupation as their Arab Spring comrades had under their dictators. Like the young people of the Arab Spring, they had used peaceful means of resistance but had had to take all kinds of violence against them. Even the agreements signed had not been respected: resolution 194 of the General Assembly, and the accords signed in Oslo and beyond, had been totally ignored, and now Mr Netanyahu kept trying to change the terms of reference and to grab as much of the West Bank as possible. Moreover Gaza was under siege by air, sea and road, people were near starvation, and 20% of the buildings had been demolished in the Israeli attack of 2009. He asked how it was possible to negotiate with your occupier on the basis of land for peace when there was no peace and the land was being taken by colonisation and settlements. There had been 150 thousand settlers in the West Bank and Gaza when negotiations started and now there were 560 thousand.

He described the September initiative which was trying to create some balance in the relationship by seeking membership of the United Nations for an independent Palestinian state in the borders of 1967, whilst recognising Israel across those borders. Recognition of an independent Palestinian state and membership of the UN would improve their ability to negotiate state to state, he said. This was part of their new strategy of non-violent popular struggle, building state institutions and achieving national unity and they would continue to negotiate as a people whose land was under occupation. There were already 117 states who recognised the independent Palestinian state in the 1967 borders but some major European countries were still undecided. His party hoped the SI would persuade them according to the resolution in Ramallah which had been agreed unanimously including Israeli friends from the Labour Party and Meretz. They also hoped that the USA under Barack Obama would play a more positive role along with European countries, and that the peace camp in Israel would be reactivated and take over from the current right-wing extremist government. His party had made great efforts to achieve unity with Hamas which was difficult when they were physically split in two, and they had insisted that Hamas follow the same non-violent strategy. He was pleased to say that Hamas had diligently followed this formula and not one rocket or bullet had come out of Gaza since Hamas had signed the reconciliation and unity agreement with Fatah.

Recalling the 1974 speech to the UN by Yasser Arafat saying that he came with an olive branch in one hand and a revolutionary gun in the other, and not to let the olive branch drop from his hand, Shaath

said they had dropped the revolutionary gun some time ago. But attempts to punish them by taking the money that was meant for building institutions, by keeping 10,000 political prisoners in Israeli jails, and by depriving their people of hope was not the way to build peace. They needed hope for the future of an independent Palestinian state living side by side with the state of Israel in peace, harmony, prosperity, social justice and democracy: this he hoped he, and all those present, would live to see.

Micha Harish, Israel Labour Party, said he had applauded the speech of Nabil Shaath not because he agreed with everything he said, but because Shaath represented those Palestinian leaders with whom, he believed, peace between Israel and Palestine would come.

On a personal note he said he had retired in 1996 after many years of being very active especially in the '70s and '80s under Willy Brandt, Bruno Kreisky, Olof Palme, and François Mitterrand, when Felipe Gonzalez was still a student leader and Salazar was in power in Portugal. He therefore wanted to bring his perspective about the International from that period until now, and that perspective, he said, was a very optimistic one.

When he had first become active in IUSY and the SI, Spain, Portugal and Greece were dictatorships where active members of the SI had to work underground, most of Latin America was under brutal military dictatorships, and the whole of Eastern Europe was under communist dictatorship. This was the background in the '70s and '80s to the SI's efforts to promote democracy, freedom, and equality. Today, Europe was free of dictatorship, Eastern Europe and much of the former Soviet Union was under democratic development, and Latin America was a democratic continent. He saw the developments in the Arab world as part of this process and was therefore optimistic. Different conditions made it hard to analyse systematically, but the efforts of young people and women, intellectuals and workers, to achieve freedom was part of that successful movement towards democracy. Many countries in Africa were also moving in that direction, and the development of South Africa from a terrible situation under apartheid to a democratic society, almost without bloodshed, was truly impressive.

He believed, as probably the oldest person active in the SI at this meeting, and having been called to be chairman of the Labour Party, that democracy was winning the historical development. He reminded participants that the Israeli-Egyptian peace negotiations had started with a visit by President Sadat to Jerusalem in 1977. The SI had played a key role at a time of crisis in the negotiations about a year later. During that deadlock, Bruno Kreisky had suggested to him that when President Sadat came to Austria he might meet with the Israeli opposition leader Shimon Peres. Two meetings took place and Willy Brandt, as President of the SI, was brought into the picture. These efforts were accepted by both sides as the renewal of negotiations which led to the peace agreement between Egypt and Israel, and, in his view, the beginning of the process by which Palestine would become an independent state. In that agreement, there was recognition for the first time that the Palestinian Authority had to be developed and this started the process that later came to Oslo.

The SI, he continued, had played a positive role also in other ways through its Middle East Committee, and he thought it could again play a role in the developments in the Arab world and in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

Having listened especially to speakers who were involved in developments in the Arab world, he thought that Egypt would continue to be the leading country there and in the Middle East: it had the greatest influence historically, academically and religiously, so the SI should give priority to the democratic process there. If it succeeded into a democratic future, as Ms Ebeid had described, the influence on the

entire Middle East and North Africa would be tremendous, and possibly also on the whole of Africa. Just as it had helped in Spain, Portugal and Greece, the SI should now help the democratic elements in Egyptian society because although they were the majority they were not so well organised as the Muslim Brotherhood.

Harish said he was proud to have been in the Rabin government that had negotiated and signed the Oslo Agreement with the PLO. Although there had been criticism as to its effectiveness, and it had not yet worked out as they hoped, he believed this agreement would prove to be the breakthrough in the relationship between the Israeli and Palestinian people: that was where, for the first time, they had moved from confrontation into dialogue.

He reviewed how Israel had overcome economic disaster and developed its high technology; and how the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin had set the Labour Party back, ending in the catastrophe of Ehud Barak's leadership. He acknowledged that Ehud Barak had tried to influence the right-wing government of Netanyahu towards acceptance of a two-state solution, and that it was conceivable that he might yet become what Menachem Begin had been in the peace agreement with Egypt.

With many new young members, the Labour Party was now reviving and was trying to influence public opinion to accept President Obama's proposal to get back to the peace negotiations on the basis of the 1967 borders. He was not sure that the resolution requesting Palestinian membership of the UN would help the peace process. Israel was used to having a majority in the UN General Assembly and was not influenced much by UN resolutions. In closing he urged the SI to encourage deep negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinian Authority, to make several visits, to bring SI leaders and to speak to the media. However openly President Shimon Peres was expressing his views, there were limits to what he could do.

Moustafa Barghouthi, Palestine, PNI, commended the Council for devoting so much time to the Arab Spring and to change in the Arab world, which was part of humanity's need for democratic transformation. We were facing profound problems including the contradiction between globalisation and monopolies, whether military or economic, that were controlling people's lives through corruption, even corrupt governments that had long existed in Arab countries. So change in the Arab world was also about the world economy, the world order, and people's need for democracy, especially where the rights of working people were concerned. As had been said, these protests were nothing less than the third huge wave of revolutions, after Eastern Europe and Latin America, in which the people sought to wrest control of their own wealth and resources from corrupt hands.

Among all these changes, he said Palestine was the one place where nothing was changing, where there was still occupation and apartheid. Although some people rejected that word, he asked how else one could describe the way Palestinians were treated: with different laws; being obliged to have a market union with Israel whose economy was thirty times bigger; having to buy their water from Israel at twice the cost, and where illegal settlers were allowed to use 42 times as much water as Palestinians. He spoke of the Israeli campaign against Palestinian rights to freedom and independence, and their calling those demands a unilateral act, despite the UN decision in 1947 that there would be two states. He insisted that the peace process had been killed by Mr Netanyahu's policies, and this was why Palestinians were obliged to go to the international community to demand their rights. He said it was shameless that the US Congress, against all its lauded principles, would threaten boycotts and punishment if the UN recognised Palestinian statehood. Bias towards Israel and putting her above international law would not contribute to peace. He strongly urged SI member parties, if they really

believed in the Arab Spring, to pressure their governments to support the Palestinian request for recognition as a member state of the UN and their efforts to end occupation and apartheid.

Barghouthi mentioned one small success that non-violent resistance had won in Belem where they had pushed the wall back, and added that there would be huge waves of such popular resistance on the July 9 anniversary of the International Court of Justice resolution that the wall, settlements and annexation of Jerusalem were illegal. He said the SI was right to oppose violence against protestors in Egypt, Tunisia and Syria, but must also oppose Israeli violence in Palestine where 28 peaceful demonstrators had recently been killed in addition to 20 others on the borders.

They were not delegitimising Israel, he continued, only the occupation and apartheid. Since the PLO had recognised Israel, he asked why Israel still refused to recognise the Palestinian state.

Solidarity with peace and democracy, he said, required strong support to the international effort to organise the flotilla to Gaza and he condemned those who were sabotaging that effort.

Israel, he continued, and some other countries were also trying to interfere in Palestinian internal affairs and influence the choice of leaders through manipulation of foreign aid; all this was inconsistent with democratic principles.

Palestinians wanted to retrieve the democracy they had lost through internal divisions. He was proud of the role the PNI had played in the reconciliation agreement between Fatah and Hamas. For the first time in decades Palestinians had unified their political programme to achieve an independent state on the 1967 borders through non-violent resistance. They had agreed to include all the other parties, to avoid one-party rule, and to have free democratic elections in May for the president, the government and parliament. They were committed to rejecting nepotism and discrimination against women as the way to give Palestinian people the right to choose their own leaders. He asked why Israel and the US Congress were objecting to this. But it would happen: he had never before seen such unity among Palestinians and it was due to factors described in this meeting: social media, the internet and the ability to communicate, to stand together and to act together. They were struggling for their freedom in the tradition of Gandhi, of Martin Luther King, and of Nelson Mandela, and they would prevail thanks to the SI's support. He asked the SI to be ahead of events in supporting the Palestinian non-violent struggle and in condemning Israeli violence against them. In this spirit he also asked the SI to accept their application to become full members of the SI.

Finally, he said the Palestinian and Israeli parties at this meeting asked for the Council's approval of the resolution passed on the Middle East Committee which supported the demand for international recognition of the Palestinian state and its acceptance as a member of the UN.

Luis Ayala said that the debate on the Middle East and other items on the agenda would be resumed the following day. Participants had a draft statement which was based on the common ground that the Israel Labour Party, Meretz, Fatah and the PNI had managed to reach when they had met in Tel Aviv and in Ramallah. That text would be dealt with, as was usual with declarations, at the end of tomorrow morning's session.

Third session, July 2

Report of the Ethics Committee

Maurice Braud, France, PS, Chair of the SI Ethics Committee, reported that since the last meeting in Paris in November the Committee had been taking into account the events of the Arab Spring, and he congratulated the colleagues present from that part of the world. Sometimes leaders there had forgotten our values, he said, so our ethics should really be at the forefront of our efforts.

As regards membership, he reported that the Committee had decided to recommend to Council upgrading the status of Fatah from consultative to full member party. There were other applications for change of status and these would be examined at the next Committee meeting and reported to the Council.

They had also examined the situation of various parties whose membership in the SI had been questioned. There was the case of the observer member party in Bulgaria, the BSD, whose leaders had been accused of serious irregularities and whose membership the Committee recommended should cease. In the case of the FPP of Abel Goumba of Central African Republic, the SPU of Ukraine, and the ASDP of Azerbaijan, the Committee was recommending to drop them from membership due to not being actively engaged in SI activities, having no representation, or not having paid membership fees for some time.

The Council had to make two difficult decisions at this meeting, he continued. We had to decide what to do with the Sandinista National Liberation Front of Nicaragua. Although they had struggled in the '70s and '80s to free their country, we had heard from SI Women about the way Nicaraguan women were treated and how the Sandinistas had been acting recently. The Committee had decided to write a letter to the FSLN and would await their reply. If they did not make a satisfactory commitment to our common values, he said the next Council meeting should apply sanctions or even exclude them from the SI.

The other case was that of the SNSD in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Committee had been discussing the situation of that party, had visited them, and had not seen any serious improvement in the way they were acting, they still expressed themselves in extremist and nationalistic ways. The Committee had decided to recommend suspension now and to send them a letter raising our concerns. If no satisfactory measures were taken there then the party's membership should be withdrawn by the next Council.

Braud said that the Committee would be working on some very concrete proposals for a new mechanism for having regular overviews of what was happening in our member parties and perhaps going more thoroughly into the actions of our members where there were reasons to worry.

Pia Locatelli wished to point out some facts. She reported that SI Women had held a regional meeting in Nicaragua in September 2005 during the electoral campaign, and SIW had joined the campaign in favour of President Daniel Ortega. They had held a private meeting with him and had addressed the topic of

women's reproductive rights and he had implied his support. But when the ruling government, which at that time did not include the Sandinistas, proposed to restrict the law on abortion - even therapeutic abortion - it was due to the vote of the Sandinistas that that law was passed, and then five days later Daniel Ortega had won the elections. During the first year of that law one hundred women had died from unsafe abortions. The SIW Council meeting in Santiago de Chile had passed a resolution calling on the new Nicaraguan government to repeal that law, and the issue had been raised later at the SI Council meeting and at subsequent meetings of the Ethics Committee, as well as at the recent SICLAC meeting. Now she understood that the Ethics Committee recommended suspending the Sandinista Party but it seemed we had to wait before taking action. The problem as she saw it was that we had a member party that was voting to prohibit even therapeutic abortions. As President of SIW she had written to President Ortega pointing out that Latin America was lagging behind in social indicators, and women's mortality during childbirth was 194 out of a thousand, much higher than in Europe. She said it was as if this topic had never been addressed and we had to start from the very beginning. It was poor women, not rich women, who would be risking their lives because some of our comrades had voted to worsen the law regarding the reproductive rights of women. She urged that action be taken now: and again asked, if not now, when?

Maurice Braud said he very well understood the remarks concerning the situation of women in Nicaragua; the Committee had examined the situation, verified the facts, and was proposing to send a formal letter to the Sandinista Party with our concerns. If the Ethics Committee was not satisfied by its next meeting, there would be penalties and sanctions imposed and a request made to the Council to exclude that party from membership.

Alexander Tomov, Bulgaria, Social Democracy, said that the decision of the Ethics Committee to exclude his party was unjust and unfair: unjust because the decision had been based on false accusations by a group of corrupt Bulgarian magistrates bent on political vengeance; and unfair because the decision had been taken before the legal process in Bulgaria had been completed. He said that the decision might have been affected by the active membership in the Committee of the elected Bulgarian Socialist Party, but it would contribute to internal wars between the different left groups instead of a policy of unification, and was against the rules and principles of our movement. He thanked the SI for 21 years of campaigning in different parts of the world for our shared values and hoped that we would continue together the struggle for social justice and solidarity as his party certainly would.

Ann Linde, Sweden, SAP, asked for clarification concerning the Sandinista Party because she had understood that the decision of the Committee was to recommend suspension for several reasons and for the next Council to decide whether to lift that suspension or to expel the party.

Maurice Braud explained that our recommendations would be communicated to them and a quick response demanded. Depending on their answer, the Ethics Committee at its next meeting would either propose to keep them in the family or to expel them.

Luis Ayala put the report of the Ethics Committee chair to the Council. He asked for a show of hands of the full members eligible to vote, one per party, first of those in favour and then those against. There was a clear signal in favour with only two against, he said, and therefore declared the report of the Ethics Committee adopted.

Report of the Finance and Administration Committee

Pertti Paasio, Finland, SDP, drew attention to distributed papers concerning the background material of the SIFAC report, including the Accounts for the year 2010 and balance sheet of the SI, the Report on the Accounts, and the list of membership fees unpaid. He reminded participants that the SI was totally dependent on membership fees and the parties' financial support in underwriting costs involved in SI meetings, which was an additional burden for some host parties. This fact also explained why sometimes there were problems in finding venues for the Council and Congress. The SI's consultative status with the United Nations had made it possible to sometimes use UN premises for our meetings but the fact remained that membership fees were practically the only source of income for the SI.

Paasio said that he and the Secretary General were always stressing the need for full and prompt payment of dues, and the Report on the Accounts was slightly less pessimistic than the previous one, but problems remained. He referred to the list of parties which had not paid their fees and emphasised that negotiations with those on the list were constantly taking place. It was clear, he said, that the SI's economic structure could no longer be based on membership fees only. We had to find ways to reduce our debt more quickly than hitherto, and to consolidate our International so we could meet the challenges of our time which would require new thinking, and a new sense of responsibility implicit in that word "we". Obviously, the world-wide character of the SI had not been sufficiently taken into consideration: there were different cultural and historical backgrounds as well as the common ideas and tolerance of differences for which the SI was famous. We had to remember this when dealing with internal problems in our political family.

Another urgent reason to consolidate the Socialist International was that turbulences in the world economy affected our member parties' ability to give economic support just as they affected our organisation itself. According to the statutes, SIFAC convenes in connection with Council meetings in order to present a formal review and appraisal of the accounts and balance sheet. The Committee hears and debates the report of the Secretary General and it approves the official documents, that is, the Accounts, the balance sheet, and the Report on the Accounts to be presented to the Council. It is not customary, he said, that the Council have long debates on these, and he saw that partly as a sign of confidence. In addition to these meetings, he said he found it necessary for the Committee to have meetings outside the Council framework, this had been attempted in the past. The way that the current state of the economy also affects our International could not be solved here at this Council meeting but definitely needed attention by the responsible bodies.

Returning to the subject of membership fees, he stressed that it was not just small and poor parties that had failed to pay their dues but there were some very prominent parties too. Dialogue between SIFAC and those parties was going on and there were some positive results that had been reached already. The purpose of the list that had been distributed was to show the role that membership fees played in the SI's economy.

José Lello, Portugal, PS, said it was hard to comment about such a global organisation relying on just 1.2 million pounds. But the situation of delayed membership fees must be looked at and there were 105 on the list. Parties paying only during the second half of the year was one thing, but over 35 parties had delays of three to ten years. He understood the difficult financial situations in those countries but we had to be clear that it was not fair for parties to expect the rights of membership without paying their dues, nor was it healthy for our organisation. He suggested that those parties should present to SIFAC some proposition on how they would pay. Something had to be done about this situation and sanctions had to be applied.

Micha Harish, Israel Labour Party, said that part of the crisis in the Israel Labour Party had been due to their being financed according to the number of seats in the Knesset, and the neglect of financial management had led to their being in debt to the SI and to the banks in Israel. He had now negotiated an agreement with the banks to recognise that debt and he hoped that in the coming months they would be able to come up with a plan and already start to pay part of the debt.

Michael McLoughlin, Ireland, Labour Party, enquired about the SI's legal status and if there was a particular structure for the SI as a non-profit organisation for its protection, particularly if there was a debt. He added that charities and other NGOs usually had structures which limited their liabilities.

Luis Ayala said that in accordance with the UK law, our organisation classified as an 'unincorporated association', clearly we did not classify as a charity nor could we use the legal form of a company or similar status limiting liability. In the past the International had set up a Trust around some assets, but that was no longer current. We had taken out a number of insurance policies to limit our liability in some areas. Nevertheless, he said that he was well aware of the exposure from his own experience as Secretary General when he has had to take personal responsibility in some Court cases involving the International where we have had to defend our rights. At another level, he added that vis-à-vis our status at the United Nations, what was relevant to maintain our position was that our accounts should demonstrate that we were funded solely by our own members and not by any government and our accounts served as legal proof of our standing.

Giampiero Alhadeff, Great Britain, Labour Party, said that as someone who has run an organisation himself, he shared and understood Ayala's position. He was worried about one sentence in the financial report referring to the continued good will of the organisation's staff and creditors being a significant factor in the continuation of the operation. He wondered if there were sacrifices being made by staff, or people not being paid.

Luis Ayala said that Lello had explained the situation very well. The total amount of outstanding membership fees was equivalent to almost one year of the SI's budget. We had managed to recover a part of those overdue fees since being almost at breaking point in 2009-2010, but there had indeed been occasions when salaries had been paid late. The SI had managed to live within its means, but it was very difficult to make plans financially and politically when there was uncertainty about the money coming in.

Pertti Paasio wished to underline not only the need to pay the membership fees, but also the importance of paying them on time. He added that the efforts of the Israel Labour Party were appreciated and he wished them success in that dynamic process.

The Report of the Chair of SIFAC was approved and the Accounts for the Year ending 31 December 2010 adopted.

Luis Ayala informed the Council that according to what had been agreed at the Paris Council, there were now 13 full members and 9 consultative members who, from this day until their fees were paid, had the status of observer parties. At the next Congress there would be no alternative but to cease the membership of those owing three or more years.

He then announced the end of the closed session and resumption of the second theme:

MAKING PEACE A REALITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST - continued

Colette Avital, Israel Labour Party, expressed her party's admiration and continuing support for George Papandreou in these difficult times.

The Middle East, she said, was living through an extraordinary transition. Even though all the reasons for the Arab Spring revolutions had already been there, we had not anticipated when those courageous young people would take to the streets and risk their lives for freedom and democracy. This dramatic change had taken place in the very culture of the Middle East where obedience to authority was the accepted rule. Springs in the Middle East were usually short seasons and this one had passed; the outcome of the revolution was not yet known. She added her voice to the pleas for the SI to play a very active role in strengthening the progressive forces throughout the region because, as we had seen in Iran, revolutions were sometimes violently suppressed, and events that shook the Middle East would also impact the rest of the world.

She congratulated the Palestinian colleagues on their new strategy of non-violence: she believed that if it had been implemented earlier it would have achieved the goal long ago. Mistakes had been made on both sides, she said, and this was not the time for accusations.

In reply to Mustapha Barghouthi's question as to why after 64 years there was no Palestinian state, she said that in 1947 Israel had accepted the UN Resolution partitioning Palestine into two states - one Jewish and one Arab -but the Arab world had rejected that. In addition it required leadership to take difficult decisions, and although Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin had been ready to do that she thought they no longer had such leadership. Now September 2011 might bring a promise and new hope, or risks and pitfalls. UN recognition of Palestinian statehood would either be a watershed moment or just a symbolic piece of diplomatic theatre, depending on the content and which states would support it. If the UN recognised the Palestinian state we would have to consider the implications and consequences on the ground.

There was commonality of interest, she pointed out, between the Israelis and the Palestinians: a Palestinian state was also a strategic need for the state of Israel. As a member of the Israel Labour Party she had been fighting for many years for the end of occupation, for freedom and self-determination and, she stressed, for a Palestinian state. But listening to her Palestinian friends she was wondering whether the opportunity had been missed because they appeared to have given up negotiations. If she were prime minister of Israel she would certainly recognise the Palestinian state, but the right-wing government was not going to do that even though not doing so would isolate Israel. She was concerned that if the General Assembly passed such a resolution without Israel's consent the effects would not be positive: negotiations would be abandoned and the occupation would continue, but Israel would no longer be under any legal obligation because the Oslo Agreement would no longer be binding. Without that agreement, she asked what would happen to people and merchandise trying to cross the border: would water and electricity still be supplied, and would the lives of Palestinians be easier. She feared that any small incident or peaceful march might flare up into violence which was something everyone should try to avoid.

There was still time, she continued, for Israelis to put pressure on the government to enter negotiations with no prior conditions and to stop building in the settlements as some groups, such as the Israeli Peace Initiative, were already doing and indeed were gathering popular support, and even some of Netanyahu's stauncher supporters were urging him to do that.

She added that there was still a possibility of tabling a resolution to give the Palestinian government and people full satisfaction while making it impossible for Israel to reject it. Such a resolution could recognise an independent Palestinian state grounded in the 1947 Resolution 181 and taking into account Israel's security needs, recognising a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital, while also recognising Israel within the 1967 borders with West Jerusalem as its capital. This would have the advantage of making UN resolutions more than a symbolic gesture and furthering the probability of a Palestinian state. It would also strengthen Palestinians in subsequent negotiations with Israel and would grant international recognition for Israel while avoiding isolation. She hoped that September 2011 would be such an important turning point for the Middle East and the fulfilment of a hope.

María Muñiz, Spain, PSOE, brought a warm welcome from her party, one of the few socialist parties still in government, and she congratulated George Papandreou on his handling of the Greek crisis.

For 40 years her party had been seeking a peaceful, sustainable and just settlement of the conflict which would respect the sovereign rights of both Palestinians and Israelis and allow them to live peacefully within the borders of 1967. Everyone had been trying to mediate such a solution, the EU, the US, the UN and the Arab countries, but now, she said, circumstances had changed and at this historic moment, we must seize the opportunity to finally find a bilateral solution; her government would do everything within its power to help in this effort. Bilateral negotiations were needed and we must ensure that no extremist or radical views threatened to stop them. We should coordinate with the EU to make sure that Palestine was recognised by the UN as an independent state within the 1967 borders, co-existing peacefully with Israel. We should be aiming for a re-start of the bilateral negotiations, and if that was not possible, or sufficient political will was lacking, then in the context of the EU we should support the UN's recognition of Palestine as an independent state.

Kent Härstedt, Sweden, SAP, said he had been really inspired by the representatives here of many countries in the Arab world whose courage was an inspiration for us all.

Concerning Israel and Palestine, he said his party had always believed in the future of two democratic states existing alongside each other within secure borders that were internationally recognised. The Israeli occupation was violating human rights and had serious consequences for the world beyond. Israel should be able to live in peace without violence and terror, and Palestinians should be able to live in freedom. The 1967 borders must be the basis for further discussions leading to secure borders - with East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine - and a resolution of the issue of refugees, the abolition of settlements and the halting of violence on both sides. He added that in such talks women should have an equal role with men and SI parties needed to try for a stronger joint resolution.

The SAP had been pushing forward the agenda, and the social democratic side now had their Congress's support to urge recognition of the state of Palestine at the UN General Assembly in September. They were also stressing the importance of East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine, and they were pushing their government to label goods that came from settlements as unacceptable.

He challenged other SI members to move forward in this direction as several European parties already had.

Third theme: THE LESSONS OF FUKUSHIMA AND THE FUTURE OF NUCLEAR ENERGY

George Papandreou introduced the third theme saying Greece, as a country prone to earthquakes, had always been against the use of nuclear energy, and Fukushima was clearly a lesson to be learned. He expressed solidarity with the people of Japan in their courageous dealing with that major tragedy, and he welcomed the President Leader of the Social Democratic Party of Japan, and member of the Upper House.

Mizuho Fukushima, Japan, SDP, SI Vice-President, first expressed gratitude for the assistance Japan had received from countries around the world following the great East Japan earthquake that had struck on March 11 with a magnitude of 9.0, one of the strongest ever recorded in her country. It had produced a massive tsunami swamping the coast of the Tohoku region, killing 15,000 people and leaving 7,500 missing and around 112,000 forced to evacuate. Most of the fatalities had been due to the tsunami which had overwhelmed the “super flood defences”. It had also devastated the area’s agricultural, fishing and industrial bases. Although reconstruction programmes were under way their pace was slowed by the crisis at the Fukushima nuclear power plant which remained unresolved. The operating reactors had automatically shut down but all electrical power had been lost so that it had become impossible to cool the fuel rods and the used nuclear fuel. The crisis was now ranked at level seven, the same as the Chernobyl disaster. Three reactors had melted down and might even have leaked nuclear material through the containment vessel releasing 770,000 tera-becquerels of radiation, so the situation was extremely serious. Although the government had ordered the evacuation of residents within 30 kilometres of the power plant, and of villages receiving yearly radiation of 20 millisieverts or more, her party believed that for the sake of children’s health further restrictions were required.

Radioactive water had been released into the ocean, she said, and this was another issue her party wished to address because the monitoring of ocean contamination was extremely inadequate. She apologised for the serious impact this crisis had had on other countries and said the government and Tokyo Electric Power Company were doing all they could, but in her view they should seek knowledge and opinions from abroad.

Her party was the only one in Japan consistently warning of the dangers of nuclear power and calling for its abolition. We had seen how such a disaster could build up and we should also remember the workers at the power plant who were suffering considerable radiation exposure. Clearly the measures taken to protect against earthquakes and tsunamis had been inadequate and the Japanese authorities, she said, bore a heavy responsibility for failing to take action. She considered the current situation to be a man-made rather than a natural disaster.

Japan currently had 54 nuclear reactors, she continued, mostly sited in areas where earthquakes are expected and also tsunamis. Her party believed that nuclear power should be abandoned, that it could never be totally safe, but that building nuclear power plants in Japan was particularly dangerous. Until the last two years Japan had been ruled by the Liberal Democratic government which worked together with the civil service and the power industry to pour revenue into the nuclear industry and to reward local authorities that accepted nuclear power plants. This policy, she said, must change.

Prime Minister Kan, she continued, had called for the shutdown of the Hamaoka nuclear power plant, said to be the most dangerous in Japan, and it was now off-line. But at the recent G8 Summit, he had declared his intention to improve nuclear power safety and maintain the industry while also promoting natural energy sources. This policy, which included exporting nuclear power plants to Vietnam and the USA, had been decided behind closed doors. She believed we must learn from the accident at Fukushima and do everything possible to impede such a policy.

The Japanese government had recently established a special independent committee to investigate this accident. The SDP believed that at the very least nuclear power plants should not be operated until that investigation had been completed and the results used to review safety standards. Her party was also opposed to the government deciding its nuclear power policy in private and before getting the IAEA's response to its 28 proposals for improvements. Clearly they had not learned from the Fukushima accident.

Recognising that the crisis at Fukushima had affected the whole international community, her party had produced an action programme aiming to phase out nuclear power plants by 2020 and to build a society based on 100% natural energy by 2050. Japan was strong in natural energy technology fields including solar, wind, geothermal and biomass power. Japan was also technologically advanced and yet had still been unable to prevent a nuclear power plant accident, and once such an accident occurred the scope of damage had no parallel. The problem of radioactive waste was also insoluble, therefore we should all work towards abolishing nuclear power and investing personal and financial resources in a shift towards sustainable, people-friendly energy sources as a means to enable human beings to live safely through future generations. In concluding she asked the SI to clearly refer to the abolishing of nuclear power in the Council Resolution and to take a leading role in this movement.

George Papandreou, thanking Mizuho Fukushima, commented on the hubris and arrogance of humans today regarding our environment and exploitation of resources. He supported her call for green development.

Heliodoro Quintero, Venezuela, *Un Nuevo Tiempo*, said that Fukushima had put the issue of nuclear energy, and worldwide energy consumption, onto the table as one of the most important issues of the last 50 years. Nuclear energy was now about 14% of global energy consumption and we had to deal with how that amount of energy was produced. He congratulated Ms Fukushima and her party on the recommendations they were making to the Japanese government concerning its energy policy. He expressed his country's strong support and solidarity with the Japanese people in their recovery from the disaster, both in infrastructure and in the economic implications. Before that accident nuclear energy had been considered very clean and safe, but now a rigorous examination was taking place as to the advantages and disadvantages of worldwide nuclear energy use, and important decisions would have to be taken. Looking back at the evolution of nuclear energy since the oil crisis in 1973, he said we could see it diminishing after the Chernobyl disaster.

At the Asia-Pacific Committee meeting in May, he continued, the SI had issued a declaration seeking to ensure protection both of people and of the environment, and exhorting the international community to reinforce the rules and procedures for nuclear plants throughout the world. His party also supported the shift from nuclear to other types of energy. The Fukushima disaster had shown that there would always be risks in connection with nuclear infrastructure, despite security measures: this accident had not been predicted, foreseen or even imagined.

The SI declaration had also mentioned the likely decrease in use of nuclear energy while other sources such as wind, solar, oil and gas had tremendous growth potential. Many nuclear plants were quite close to their term of operation and regulators would be requesting a slow track or a halt to plans for new nuclear energy plants especially in the US and Europe, coinciding with the views of the SDP of Japan.

Coming from an oil producing country, he pointed out that oil, gas and renewable energies were cheap, easy to handle, secure and efficient and were not subject to the risks inherent in nuclear energy. They had infinite growth potential and with technological development could produce all the energies needed for worldwide economic development, social improvement and a clean environment.

His party believed that a dialogue between producing and consuming countries was very important because such a discussion could lead to a worldwide energy policy that would allow the economic growth necessary to improve conditions in those countries of the world with the greatest need. The technological development necessary to increase renewables, which currently were 7% of sources while oil, gas and coal were about 80%, could lead to the alleviation of poverty which might be the most important objective of such an initiative. This was his party's recommendation to the Socialist International.

Hugo Morán, Spain, PSOE, said his party had been truly privileged to hear Ms Fukushima's contribution, and agreed with every single point she had raised. These were difficult times, times of crisis, and we should always find the positive side of such negative events. There would be some countries that would sit back and hope the next emergency would not happen to them, while others would take positive action to prevent a reoccurrence. What was clear was that we must not allow speculators to decide for us: responsible politicians and governments must take the decisions on nuclear energy. This was not something new, he continued, referring to crucial elements for development such as water, energy and food. As social democrats we could not block access to one of those vital elements: it would not be fair to say to many countries that they could no longer have access to nuclear energy, considered by some to be the energy of the future. But morality should push us to implement the same energy models throughout the world because nuclear energy would not guarantee a level playing field for all, nor equal opportunities for growth and development. We could not have a club of countries that had nuclear energy and excluded other countries, although we might prohibit nuclear activity near our borders because it was a high-risk technology.

The lesson offered to us by Mizuho Fukushima apologising on behalf of Japan for the implications of the nuclear accident there meant that some could claim the right to stop the growth of nuclear energy in adjacent countries. We needed to take action immediately, he said, by setting up control mechanisms for reactors functioning now and dismantling those that were not safe. This had to happen very soon because every country had to have adequate electricity. The International Atomic Energy Agency should really look at the interests of citizens and not so much the concerns of the industry, he concluded.

Petra Bayr, Austria, SPÖ, said that for her the lessons from Fukushima were obvious: nuclear power technology was insecure even at the highest technical levels. This energy was not sustainable; it was not CO2 neutral; and it was not cheap as some tried to claim. A quarter of a century after the disaster in Chernobyl the state of Ukraine was still paying about 8% of its GDP to manage the damage from the disaster, and would continue to do so for the next hundred years. The German people had invested hugely in establishing a nuclear infrastructure but it was private enterprise that had profited from it. And the Japanese government had admitted soon after the Fukushima disaster that it did not have the money to deal with the resulting damage.

In her view it was the same story throughout the capitalist system: the taxpayer would pay and the private enterprises would make the money, a lot of money, on which they often did not pay taxes. A fully financed nuclear power plant could earn one million Euros a day, she said. The one single nuclear power plant that was really safe, more or less everlasting, and sustainable was the Sun. It had a security system of about 150 million kilometres from Earth and provided about seven thousand times more energy than we used every year.

Austria had decided against nuclear technology 30 years ago and now had decided to stop importing electricity from nuclear sources by 2015. In good cooperation with German colleagues, with environmental NGOs and civil society, they would campaign for a European citizens' initiative in 2012 to stop this dangerous, unsustainable and very expensive technology within the EU. If the owners of nuclear power plants would shoulder all the risks and liabilities for storage of nuclear waste for the next thousand years, the cost would deprive nuclear power of its effectiveness. Social democrats and socialists shared this goal with the great majority of people worldwide, she said, inviting all interested parties to join this campaign and hoping that a renewed and strengthened SI would be in the vanguard of a global change to renewable energy and energy efficiency. She was sure that a future global energy policy would avoid energy poverty, would be egalitarian and sustainable, and would certainly be nuclear-free.

Nicos Hadjistephanou, Cyprus, EDEK, brought greetings from the President of EDEK, Yiannakis Omirou and from Vassos Lyssarides, and expressed his party's solidarity and admiration for Prime Minister Papandreou. He said socialists in Cyprus supported the vision and hopes of the Arab world for human rights and freedom and stood by the efforts to achieve peace in the Middle East and were willing to contribute to these efforts as much as possible. He stressed that the socialist of Cyprus supported the struggle of all the nations of the world for human rights and social justice.

He added that his party was concerned about disasters from nuclear energy and therefore had called on their neighbours in Turkey to give up on plans to build a nuclear plant across from Cyprus since that region of Turkey was very liable to earthquakes and would bring permanent danger for all countries in the Mediterranean. The nuclear threat, he pointed out, did not distinguish between peoples and nations.

With reference to the situation in his own country, Cyprus, where Turkey invaded in 1974 and still occupied 37% of the Cypriot territory, he thanked the SI for its support over the years and hoped this would continue and help in finding a solution on the basis of humanitarian principles of law, the UN resolutions for Cyprus, and the decision of international bodies working on the Cyprus question. His party wanted a peaceful solution without foreign troops, occupation, invasion or intervention. This continuing problem was jeopardising peace in the broader region and was maintaining an unjust situation for both Turkish and Greek Cypriots. EDEK would continue to struggle together with the SI to achieve the ideals of this global socialist family

Beatriz Paredes, Mexico, PRI, SI Vice-President, expressed solidarity with the people of Japan, stressing the significance of the presence of Mizuho Fukushima, a progressive woman of great importance and high position in her country. The nuclear disaster in Japan had put the question of nuclear safety onto the global agenda. The SI had set up a special committee to look at climate change and the impact of radiation and greenhouse gases, all of which were interlinked in their impact on development, on climate change, and on protection of our planet.

Our choice of energy source was extremely important, she said, and people had to adopt cleaner sources. The IAEA must take preventive measures to ensure that we had no dangerous nuclear plants still in use. Some countries, like Mexico, had mixed sources of energy and a lot of emphasis had been given to oil, but that did not protect our environment. We therefore needed to invest in research to bring down the cost of clean energy in more countries.

At the COP17 Summit on Climate Change in South Africa, she continued, some very important decisions would be made concerning emissions and the implementation of the second Kyoto Protocol. She appealed to all member parties to bring pressure to bear so that the Summit would approve a draft plan to ensure finally moving towards a shift to cleaner and renewable energy. The impact of fossil fuel use and the nuclear accident had caused us to think carefully, to revise our choices, and to look into cleaner sources of energy.

Luca Cefisi, Italy, PSI, reported that Italy had just held a popular referendum on the use of nuclear energy which showed that an overwhelming 95% of people were against its use. This was not just an emotional response to what had happened in Japan. Technology was neither right- nor left-wing, but the way we used technology was indeed a political issue. Nuclear power plants, he said, were a macro-machine, an élite of fuel, and the scientists knew everything until the moment when a problem arose, and then they were not so wise. Democratic control of technology and science was a key problem for us because renewable sources had one big difference from nuclear power: they could be controlled by local communities and small enterprises. That was a good democratic reason to be in favour of the sustainable energies.

Italy and Austria had been the first nuclear-free countries in Europe. We must extend this model, he concluded, not out of fear but out of hope for the future and faith in the capacity of ordinary people to control even the technology of science.

George Papandreou agreed about the political importance of the issue. As Mizuho Fukushima had so truthfully said, when a nuclear accident took place humans could not control it, so if we wanted to empower people we had to create the types of technology that people could control: it was a question of democracy. He thought the draft resolution allowed for the different views within our family and also showed the direction we all agreed upon: to move to sustainable and green economies and technologies that truly empower local communities.

Announcing the conclusion of that topic, he said there were three participants who wished to speak on specific issues. He gave the floor to the former Prime Minister of Nepal, a country the SI had been much involved with in efforts to assist the democratic transition.

SPECIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Sher Bahadur Deuba, Nepal, NCP, SI Vice-President, said that recent historic events such as the Japanese tsunami and the calls for democracy in the Arab world had clearly demonstrated that we are part of one global community. The leaders of the social democratic movement had been amazingly farsighted in their political wisdom and their efforts to unite the world within the movement.

His party, the Nepali Congress Party, had been fighting for democracy for 70 years against the ruling oligarchs, had gone through many difficulties and made many sacrifices. Nepal had finally freed itself from the clutches of those rulers, he said. A seven-party alliance against the king had come to an agreement with the Maoist communist party which had been leading an armed insurgency but which now became part of the peaceful democratic movement that had forced the king to concede to the people's aspirations. The resulting Nepalese Assembly had decided to abolish the monarchy. It was also meant to enact a new constitution to bring lasting peace but difficulties with the Maoist paramilitary wing had led to little progress being made on this matter. Other difficulties involved in the drafting of the constitution had arisen from differences among the political parties. It was proving hard to complete the process since it involved gaining the Maoists' cooperation to produce a democratic constitution for a lasting peace.

The SI had been a driving force for democracy in Europe, Africa, and Asia, he said, and now had an equally important role to play in Nepal. He called for support of his country's goal to achieve democracy, and since all humans felt the desire for freedom and justice, he expressed his support to all the people in the Arab world and wished them success in their struggles for democracy, which was surely the only system that empowered all the citizens, women and men.

In closing, he applauded the SI's agenda for a nuclear-free world and its support for clean energy sources so as to ensure a safe world for coming generations.

Taulant Balla, Albania, SPA, congratulated the SI President on his strong leadership of his country. As Greece's closest neighbour Albania was very grateful to Papandreou's government for all they had done for about 700 thousand immigrants to Greece through an important law that had passed only because of the votes of socialist parliamentarians and that guaranteed equality of treatment.

Concerning the political situation in his country, he said his party and the coalition had had one of the most important victories in the last 20 years when they won all the local elections in all the major cities. Although their party leader had also won for the fourth time in Tirana, the right-wing conservative government had started a process of manipulation and was refusing to accept the result, thereby causing for the last two months a deep political crisis. In light of this problem he warmly welcomed the draft resolution on South-Eastern Europe and invited all SI members that were in the European Parliament to join in this battle for real democracy in Albania. We had been talking about the Arab Spring, he added, and surely elections were a very good way to maintain democracy.

The facts of the Albanian government's manipulation would be sent to every member party, he said, and he urged support for the SI resolution that addressed the main challenges facing his party with two contested elections that were hindering its path towards membership of the European Union. In that connection he said the support by Papandreou's government for entry by all the western Balkan countries was another example of the SI President's great leadership.

Aliaksandra-Volha Tyhrytskaya, Belarus, BSDP-H, Vice-Chairwoman of the party, wished to report on the situation in her country. The Belarusian miracle of economic stability had vanished as sources of foreign credit had been exhausted and the ruble had been devalued by 56% leaving many pensioners, other citizens and small businesses in financial ruin. Her country had one of the widest economic deficits in the world at 16% of GDP. Average salaries had been reduced by 50%, and people were in a panic.

There was now an enormous black market for currency, especially dollars and Euros, because neither citizens nor legal entities could buy foreign currency legally, making it very difficult to travel abroad. There was rapidly increasing unemployment due to massive lay-offs in state and private industry, and people were desperately trying to convert their rubles into other currencies.

Meanwhile, she said, the government was denying the crisis and in June Aleksandre Lukashenko had made the outrageous statement that there was no crisis, but experts agreed that millions of dollars were needed to avert disaster and the only moves coming from the government were populist promises to improve the situation. The Swedish foreign minister Carl Bildt had stated that collapse was complete, and rapidly falling living standards were leading to protests against the authorities. In June an internet campaign had been organised encouraging people to come to the central square of the cities every Wednesday at 7p.m. to express their discontent in silence, with no slogans and no banners. Even so, the authorities had detained over 460 people across Belarus; in Minsk police had detained 220 protesters and several journalists, foreign nationals and diplomats including the first secretary of the Swedish embassy who was later released. Some of the detainees had eventually been released, some had been beaten and charged with disorderly conduct, and internet activists had been harassed. The government had cracked down even more strongly after the falsified presidential elections in December 2010, so it was punishing both political opposition and civil society. Lukashenko's oppressive regime, she continued, had weakened the social democratic forces but they were still determined to continue their struggle for transparent elections, a free civil society, independent media, local democratic governance and an independent judicial framework. Her party was very grateful to the SI and its Secretary General: they knew they were not forgotten and they thanked their international partners at the National Democratic Institute and the Olof Palme Centre for technical and moral help. She called upon neighbouring countries, especially socialists, for solidarity in action.

In conclusion she said her party was appealing to the SI and to the international community for help in securing the release of all political prisoners. They were also calling for extra measures of support and assistance to imprisoned democratic leaders and their family members: Belarusians were now isolated from the whole world but their hearts were open for cooperation.

Third theme: ESTABLISHMENT OF A WORKING GROUP TO PREPARE PROPOSALS ON REFORM OF THE SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL

George Papandreou said the Council should now turn to the question of setting up a Working Group to look at possible changes to the SI as had been discussed in the Presidium. He drew attention to the letter he and the Secretary General had sent out concerning such a Working Group which would be open to all member parties and would examine and formulate proposals on reform and on any suggestions for improvements to the work of the existing committees. A first draft of proposals would then be put to the next Council meeting in advance of the Congress in 2012.

The proposal of the presidium was to have a co-chaired group of three people, headed by Eero Heinäluoma, who had just been elected President of the Finnish parliament; Beatriz Paredes who symbolised the need to support women in democratic developments; and Nouzha Chekrouni from the Arab world. These three SI vice-presidents from northern Europe, Latin America and North Africa would help to steer the Working Group to which any SI member party could nominate a representative and which we hoped could have gender and regional balance and be as representative as possible.

The Working Group would be open to all kinds of suggestions from parties and committees which would be brought together in an ongoing process, then assessed and put to the next Council.

Eero Heinäluoma, Finland, SDP, SI Vice-President, said that making our work more effective was a really important task for us all as the only worldwide political international. He had of course already discussed with the co-chairs and others so as to have a good first proposal for the next Council, and there was no lack of ideas. He stressed that the WG would be open to all member parties and suggested they should inform the secretariat of their interest so that a first meeting could be held in September. He stressed the need for all parties who had ideas on developing the work should be involved in this process.

José Lello, congratulated the President on an initiative of the utmost importance. The SI needed a push simply because the socialist movement was facing great difficulties: something in our message was failing as we faced this difficult and different world so we had to discuss what needed to be changed or improved regarding the future. Referring to the President's touching comments about the people's inability to deal with national problems because someone in Wall Street was making the decisions, he said the SI must create new patterns to deal with global politics. He agreed that the best way was to gather up people's suggestions but was concerned that a large group would be less productive, so the three co-chairs should present a draft proposition based on the suggestions received in writing and put forward a paper to the next Council meeting.

Shazia Marri, Pakistan, PPP, was happy to see the constitution of the Working Group as promised in the letter from the President and Secretary General. She agreed that changes needed to be made but did not think the SI had failed at all. The agenda of social democrats was always challenging, and SI members who were in government were facing huge problems such as the economic crisis and extremist mind-sets. She welcomed the idea of members' suggestions for the work and said her party would be contributing.

María Muñoz said her party fully supported the idea of a Working Group on the reform of the SI. We had to rethink our structures, our methods, and the system of representation in the SI in order to make it up-to-date and able to be a strong, influential social-democratic voice in the world. Her party wished to be a member of the WG. She warned that we should avoid any sign of division which the conservatives could exploit. She nominated José Antonio Espejo to collaborate in this reform work on behalf of the PSOE.

László Kóvacs, Hungary, MSzP, strongly supported the idea of reform because every organisation from time to time required refreshment and renewal. He agreed that the SI was much more global than any other political family. As a member of the European Commission he had wondered why the socialist parties had been hit by the economic crisis more severely than the conservatives, and he had concluded that it was because socialist supporters came from lower-income groups. He said his party would like to participate in the group.

Ahmed Ould Daddah, Mauritania, said he saw a tendency in the SI to consider the importance of a country rather than of a party within a country. He added that the Secretary General worked under very difficult conditions and had done an excellent job. He greatly appreciated those efforts.

Concerning the Presidium, he thought it had not made the best possible decision. There were always risks in these situations where people relied on each other and the job might not get done. There was

also the risk of too much on the agenda and perhaps too many members. He recommended that a group should be chosen to do a particular job which would then be decided on by the Council.

Mario Nalpatian, Armenia, ARF-D, agreed about the need for reform, but saw that this had already begun with the letter of April 4 sent by the President and Secretary General. His party accepted the idea of three co-chairs to be in charge of its management, and he thought the three individuals chosen were very suitable. His party would want to join the WG and believed that the proposals for reform should be almost complete by the next Council meeting for adoption by the next Congress.

Yondon Otgonbayar, Mongolia, MPP, considered this a timely proposal in which his party would wish to join. He suggested that parties should raise their hand if they wished to join the WG and the presidium should decide on regional representation and numbers.

Najmaldin Karim, Iraq, PUK, emphasised the importance of representation from the different regions. The Kurdish issue spanned several countries; his party would like to participate in the WG.

Luis Achilles Moreno, Venezuela, AD, stressed that the need for reform was not due to failure: the SI had worked very hard, and the executive had provided support when countries had internal problems. Of course we had to adapt to ever-changing global situations. His party supported the President's proposal for a broad WG and wished to participate in its work.

Marije Laffeber, Netherlands, PvdA, offered congratulations on a brave and important proposal. Her party would want to be in the WG which should have an open door like all SI committees. She thought that in addition to the three co-chairs there should be a steering group to ensure regional and gender balance. She agreed with the idea of written proposals so that each party would be able to respond.

Manuel Laguarda, Uruguay, PSU, SI Vice-President, said there was clearly agreement with the Presidium's proposal, and with the letter of early April. His party would try to take part, and he recommended taking a good look at suggestions already made.

Umut Oran, Turkey, CHP, said his party had read the letter and agreed with all the ideas in it. His party would like to take part and contribute to the reform of the SI.

Viviana Piñeiro, IUSY, SI Vice-President, said that IUSY had been discussing such reform for a long time. They thought the participation should be as broad as possible and that the group was well on its way to full operation. IUSY had initiated a reform process in 2008 with the same purpose and would want to take part in this group. She asked the Council to support the text from IUSY which contained vital points concerning the new challenges of the 21st century.

George Papandreou said we were continually reforming, as for instance in the new gender balance of the Presidium since the last Congress, and the greater regional balance. He agreed with Lászlo that the SI was indeed the most global movement and the most relevant, but whether our voice was heard sufficiently was another question. Socialist parties in Europe were being hit hard by the right who used their money successfully and had turned a bank crisis into a sovereign crisis of government. In addition to supporting our national parties we had to look at our way of dealing with campaigns and the media, and in these areas we clearly needed help.

Summarising the conclusions concerning the Working Group, he noted broad approval and that its task was to present issues of reform so as to incorporate all the ideas. Some things might be about the constitution of our movement, and others more political or more informal, such as the presence at this meeting of bloggers.

He said that Eero and the co-chairs would agree on the time frame. There was the question raised of whether a smaller core was needed within the WG. He recommended trusting the co-chairs to work those things out. This WG had to come up with specific proposals but he suggested opening up to other methods where people did not need to be physically present in order to contribute their ideas.

Papandreou asked if there was agreement on this basis, and the decision was approved.

Adoption of Statements and Resolutions of the Council

The *Resolution on Belarus* was adopted.

The *Motion proposed by the CHP of Turkey concerning Parliamentarians* was accepted.

The *Statement on Lessons of Fukushima and the Future of Nuclear Energy* was agreed.

Turning to the draft resolution on the Middle East he said there was a slight amendment in the second paragraph concerning the two-state solution, and asked if this was accepted.

Micha Harish said the Labour Party would abstain on this resolution because they had a different approach on how the peace process could be renewed. They had reservations about certain details and believed that these would be seen in a different way when it came to direct negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis. The draft did not mention the former agreement to leave some settlements under Israeli control in exchange for territories to be given to the Palestinian state.

He mentioned further problematic points concerning Gaza and Hamas and the latter's denial of Israel's right to exist, and its opposition to the Oslo agreements which were the basis of the peace process. Hamas was terrorising civilians in the south of Israel, he said, and his party could not support reconciliation with Hamas without taking a stand against its behaviour. He reminded the meeting that Arab countries had refused to agree to the UN resolution that Israelis had accepted, and had made war on a weak unarmed Israel.

Finally he again stressed the importance of Israeli public opinion in the peace process. He said the document would be seen as pro-Palestinian which would not be useful to the SI's influence in Israel nor help the peace process.

Rather than vote against the resolution they would abstain because they knew the SI and most of its members to be true friends and supporters of Israel, though not of the Israeli government's policies: some delegations had acknowledged that the document was one-sided. Also there were some very basic elements concerning the peace process that they agreed with.

In addition, he said, his party believed that in the coming months they could produce a more balanced and more realistic document that enhanced the role of the SI in furthering the peace process.

He pointed to the absence of any mention of Barack Obama or the US opposition to the move of the Palestinians in the UN, which could be critical; nor was there mention of the former British Prime Minister Blair and his efforts, nor of the Arab countries or Russia. He acknowledged his own party's on-going crisis and its poor functioning in relation to the SI as contributing to the weakness of the document.

Finally, he said he had listened very carefully to the impressive debates about the development of democratic processes in the Arab world but no one, not even he himself, had mentioned Iran which was seen as the greater threat by Israel, by Russia and other countries, so to deal with the Middle East without taking Iran into account could be seen as omitting something.

George Papandreou said that the added value of the SI was in being able to bridge differences and find forward-looking solutions, but we could not always be successful. A general debate on this subject could continue for hours but it would be useful to hear some specific points.

Moustafa Barghouthi expressed surprise at Micha Harish's speech because Colette Avital had informed them that they agreed to the resolution. The PNI, Fatah and the Labour Party had agreed to the amendment so this abstention was unusual.

In his view changes to the borders were an effort to legitimise illegal settlements. Acceptance of these changes could mean annexing a big part of Palestinian territory and also confiscating 85% of water resources of the future Palestinian state. He again pointed out that Hamas had agreed to abstain from violence and to accept the two-state solution on the basis of the 1967 borders. His party was not advocating a coup d'état against Netanyahu: it was up to the Labour Party to win against him democratically, just as Palestinians wanted their democratic rights. He repeated that there could not be a balanced position between occupiers and the occupied, between those practising apartheid and the victims of apartheid. He emphasised that the resolution had been agreed in Ramallah and was very important because it showed that the SI supported the Palestinian people's right to be free and to be recognised. He had just heard that the Spanish parliament had decided to support recognition of the Palestinian state and he strongly hoped the Israel Labour Party would reconsider its position.

Nabil Shaath said he could accept the abstention: we did not need to argue each point again. Micha Harish appeared to have come up with a position totally opposite to that of the Secretaries General of the Israel Labour Party and Meretz in Ramallah. Everyone had the right to abstain, but he strongly urged him not to.

His party was committed to real negotiations like those with the late Yitzhak Rabin which had led to withdrawal from many parts of the West Bank and Gaza, and to the creation of the Palestinian Authority and the most important period of growth for the Israeli and Palestinian economies. But today free negotiations were impossible due to the ruling-out of previous agreements. He said that Israel was already violating the Oslo Agreement with its siege against Gaza. He mentioned other failures including by Barack Obama who had given Netanyahu 65 billion dollars' worth of aircraft and security systems but had failed to deliver on promises to President Abu Mazen. The US President had many other concerns, including pressure from the Tea Party rather than from the Jewish lobby, so Palestinians were appealing to the SI.

George Papandreou confirmed that there was already a resolution agreed by the Middle East Committee in June, and also one agreed on by the Council in New York, as well as one on Iran approved

at the Paris Council. We should look at the language of those for possible suggestions but otherwise we would have to proceed with the abstention of one of our members.

Micha Harish wished to clarify that due to the deadlock in the peace process, the Labour Party had moved into opposition after being in Netanyahu's government under the leadership of Ehud Barak. Before accepting temporary chairmanship of the Labour Party he had joined the Jewish lobby for the peace process in American politics. These were important steps towards a real peace process. He had taken personal responsibility for getting his party into this situation and the party had decided this resolution was not in line with its current policies for peace. He considered abstention to be part of the democratic process and they would continue to work together for the real development of the peace process.

George Papandreou suggested adding a phrase from the New York resolution and also adding a reference to the resolution on Iran. It was understandable that there were sometimes disagreements on difficult issues.

The *Resolution on the Middle East* was adopted with one abstention.

Papandreou then asked if there were any comments on the draft resolution on South-Eastern Europe.

Karolina Leakovic, Croatia, SDP, said they had given the Secretary General two suggested amendments that would stress the role of her country as a future member of the European Union.

Papandreou suggested also adding a reference to the fact that Ratko Mladic had been arrested which would strengthen Serbia's European prospects.

With these amendments the *Resolution on South-Eastern Europe* was adopted.

Turning to the draft resolution on the Arab world, he suggested a small revision to clarify that democracy was not restricted to any religion.

Henny Seibeb, Namibia, SWAPO, said their party was not in agreement with recognising the Libyan National Transitional Council and regretted having to abstain from adopting this resolution.

Joshua Osih, Cameroon, SDF, confirmed that the African Union did not recognise the Libyan NTC and suggested replacing that reference with: "support the struggle of the Libyan people for a peaceful, stable and democratic society and endorse all efforts in this regard".

Papandreou pointed out that many countries and parties had recognised both sides. He thought the proposal was a good one as the ANC had been working hard to find a diplomatic solution and many SI parties supported both the ANC and the African Union's initiatives.

Nana Mint Cheikhna, Mauritania, RFD, said we were political parties and not government representatives, nor did we speak on behalf of the African Union. Some parties had recognised the NTC and we were not bound by the position of the African Union which in the past had visibly supported Colonel Gaddafi.

João Salvador dos Santos Neto, Angola, MPLA, said his party did not recognise the NTC.

Ebrahim Ebrahim, South Africa, ANC, agreed with the representative from Angola and supported the proposed change to the draft resolution.

Benoît-Joseph Mouity-Nzamba, Gabon, PGP, said his party fully agreed with the amendment introduced by the SDF of Cameroon.

Johann Hassel reiterated the importance of taking into account Western Sahara in talking about the Arab Spring. He suggested adding a paragraph to the current draft resolution expressing support to the Saharawi people's right to self-determination; calling for an end to human rights violations; the release of political prisoners, and urging Morocco and the Polisario Front to continue to negotiate under the UN for a peaceful and lasting solution to the conflict.

Larbi Ajjoul, Morocco, USFP said he was astonished to hear our comrade from IUSY talking about the Western Sahara in such a way. The subject had been discussed in the SI and a peace process under the aegis of the UN was under way with his party's encouragement. He said the Algerian government was solely responsible for blocking the process. He did not want to see IUSY's amendment adopted without discussion and asked that the Mediterranean Committee continue its work, as decided in the Paris Council meeting, and taking into account the present political situation in the Arab world.

Maria Muñiz, Spain, PSOE, said her party had the presidency of the Mediterranean Committee and had been asked to find a common SI position on this issue. She advised waiting for that rather than risking all the efforts that had been made so far. The Mediterranean Committee had been talking to everyone in the area, had been given a mandate, and would prepare a specific resolution which could then be broadly debated. She added that the NTC should be recognised as the legitimate representative of the Libyan people.

Jean-Christophe Cambadélis, France, PS approved of the Spanish approach since it was hard to include such a complex subject as the Western Sahara in the current resolution. Regarding Libya they supported the proposal from Spain and Cameroon to recognise the rights of the Libyan people without specifying any particular organisation.

Mohamed Sidati, Polisario Front, said that a number of SI member parties had supported the added amendment: handing the problem over to the Mediterranean Committee or the Africa Committee was just a ruse to take Western Sahara off the agenda. The area was a theatre of resistance in the Arab world that had seen violence and violation of human rights and should be dealt with by the SI. It was too complex to be dealt with by any committee, he said, and asked for the amendment at least to be put to the vote.

Ebrahim Ebrahim, South Africa, ANC, supported the amendment on Western Sahara. The SI should say very clearly that there was an illegal occupation by Morocco and that had to be condemned. We could say there had to be a peaceful resolution of the Western Sahara issue and that the people of that region had a right to self-determination.

Concerning the NTC he thought the issue would only be resolved by the intervention of the African Union which included representatives from both sides. It was not helpful to side with one party and call the other illegitimate. Our task was to bring both parties together to find a peaceful, democratic resolution of the problem as the AU had decided to do.

Ahmed Ould Daddah, Mauritania RFD, said his party was very much concerned about the conflict between two Arab peoples, the Saharawi and the Moroccans, and they wanted everything to be done to quickly reach a solution. He thought mention should be made in the resolution that the Mediterranean Committee would try to reach a consensus on resolving the conflict.

Larbi Ajjoul, Morocco USFP, pointed out that there was no text for such an amendment. He added that we had to respect processes already launched, so his party would agree to the Mediterranean Committee preparing an up-to-date approach to resolving the question of Western Sahara in compliance with international law and the people's right to choose from among the political options available. They therefore supported the Spanish proposal.

Ahmed Ould Daddah, Mauritania RFD, said it was not possible to speak about problems in the Arab world without mentioning the question of Sahara. It would mean our organisation was not facing up to its responsibilities to show solidarity with people in that part of the world who were in favour of progress. At the same time he would not want the resolution to denounce or condemn any party.

The President, before handing over to the Secretary General to advance on a proposal on Western Sahara, reiterated a point he had made in Paris and in New York. The SI had a double role: to come up with a political statement of our views, and sometimes decisions would be taken by a majority and without consensus; and also to try to build confidence and participate in the creation of a solution to a conflict which might not be so much helped by a majority decision. In that spirit we had been working on a possible compromise both on Western Sahara and on the Libyan issue.

The SG agreed that we had to follow our procedures. A mandate had been given to the Mediterranean Committee and we were not considering withdrawing it. It was unfortunate that a draft text had not been received earlier because then, common ground might have been attainable.

He outlined that three elements were emerging from the exchanges: firstly, that Morocco and the Polisario Front should continue to negotiate under UN auspices a peaceful and lasting solution to the conflict in Western Sahara; second, support, as expressed on previous occasions, for the right of the Saharawi people to self-determination and for the efforts of the UN Special Envoy; and third, that the SI Mediterranean Committee be asked to continue its work in favour of democracy and human rights in that region. He suggested that a text with these three elements should provide the common ground for the SI to present a united position on this very difficult issue.

Maria Muñiz, Spain, PSOE, expressed thanks for a very constructive solution to the controversy and thought everyone would agree on this proposal. She said the Mediterranean Committee would continue to work on the search for a solution and on the negotiations between the two sides.

Larbi Ajjoul, Morocco, USFP, said that it was a fairly balanced formulation and his party agreed with the wording proposed.

Mohamed Sidati, Polisario Front, expressed thanks for Ayala's proposal. He said we had to clarify with the French, Moroccan and Spanish comrades that the question of Western Sahara was a responsibility of the SI that the Mediterranean Committee would deal with, and then put to Congress and other fora; but we had to acknowledge that the issue overlapped into other committees such as the Africa Committee.

The President said we appeared to also have agreement on the issue of Libya even though there were some differences. He read out the proposed text concerning the NTC asked if it was accepted.

Namibia SWAPO, said the only problem was ‘recognition’ of the Libyan NTC.

Chantal Kambiwa, Cameroon SDF, SI Vice-President, said surely the SI wanted to unite the Libyan people and our speakers from Libya had said that things were moving in the right direction. It was not for us to decide which side to be with: we must support the entire population. There was no point in mentioning the NTC by name even though they were working hard; we must support the efforts of the Libyan people to bring peace.

Ebrahim Ebrahim, South Africa ANC, reiterated that it was not helpful to say one party was legitimate and another not. African parties recognised this to be an African problem which the AU was trying to resolve. Our task was to bring both parties together. The President of South Africa had taken important steps towards resolving the problem of Libya and they were in contact with all the parties.

The President suggested trying once more. We had invited the representative of the NTC who were obviously part of the solution. We were not going to recognise them diplomatically because we were parties, not governments, but it was important to recognise that they represented a large part of the Libyan people. He read out a revised text and an additional paragraph based on comments from the Egyptian and Tunisian friends. All these changes, he said, would be very carefully included in the final wording of the resolution on the Arab world, taking into account all sensitivities.

The Resolution on *Advancing people’s hopes in the Arab world: supporting the vision of freedoms and rights for all* was agreed.

The SG said Council could not conclude without some important procedural matters.

First, we had established a Working Group that would meet in Geneva on 12 September.

In addition to the resolution that had just been passed, the SI was making a new and ambitious commitment through a newly established special committee on the Arab world to pursue its contacts with all the new actors in that region, and parties would be informed when the first meeting would take place.

The SI would be going to South Africa where the COP17 would be meeting, to which the environment ministers of all SI member parties in government would be invited.

The Latin America Committee would be meeting in Brazil, the Africa Committee would meet in Namibia and the Asia-Pacific Committee would meet in Ulaanbaatar.

Concerning the next Council meeting, the SG said there had been a fraternal invitation from the Partido Liberación Nacional which was in government in Costa Rica. The Presidium had discussed this and agreed to accept it. The party had a good tradition and a woman as President: President Laura Chinchilla.

The Working Group would meet in Geneva in September and again in advance of the Council meeting in Costa Rica.

He further announced that the next Congress would take place for the very first time in Africa. Much work had gone into finding the most symbolic and ground-breaking venue and after many contacts with the Deputy President of South Africa, Kgalema Motlante and the Secretary General of the ANC - represented here by Ebrahim Ebrahim – the XXIV SI Congress would be held in South Africa. Next year, he added, would be the 100th anniversary of the founding of the African National Congress, the beginning of the organised struggle against apartheid and this event would underline the global character of our organisation and the advances members of our political family had made in Africa.

Before concluding, Ayala offered profound thanks to our Greek comrades; to the General Secretary of the party, Michalis Karchimakis; to the International Secretary Paulina Lampsa and all her collaborators; and particularly to the party leader and Prime Minister whose fighting spirit was also reflected in others at this meeting who had been able to take heroic decisions that all socialists and social democrats could be proud of.

George Papandreou thanked all the participants for the very warm and welcome support in the difficult struggle of the Greek people. He thanked Luis Ayala and all the Vice-Presidents, the SI secretariat, the interpreters and all the volunteers. This sense of solidarity, he said, was an inspiration and living in a country that had been fighting for democratic human rights and social justice for thousands of years, he often thought of what we should learn from the past. He pointed out that the Acropolis showed attempts to guarantee transparency in government spending; and from the Acropolis one could see the many islands that had all been different cities and different countries that had come together in their common values, just as we in the SI were trying to unite different countries and different cultures through our common values.

In ancient times, he continued, there had been debates about citizens' rights, about slaves and immigrants becoming citizens, and the longest peace agreement in history that had lasted for a thousand years, reaffirmed every four years during the Olympic Games, the so-called Olympic truce. He spoke of the small hill across from the Acropolis where politicians could speak to the people and every citizen had a voice. Although our cities were now too big for that there was the internet which was creating a more direct democracy. In those times politics and the market were not separated. The Agora meant both the market place and also to give a political speech, and we too should bring politics and government into the market place.

Concerning the Arab world and democracy, he said in ancient Greece democracy was not Christian: it was a global concept. Moreover without the Arab world, we would not know much about those times. About 90% of everything that was translated into other languages was translated from ancient Greek into Arabic and then into other languages, and although the Greek texts were lost most of the Arab texts in Alexandria had survived. This showed the links between us and why democracy is so important for our movement.

In concluding, he again welcomed everyone to Athens where the values of democracy, social justice and respect for the environment were cherished. He asked them to take home the message that Greece was strong and would survive and succeed and that our socialist movement was at the forefront of change in the world.

The meeting was declared closed.