
REPORT OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL

FROM BERLIN TO NEW YORK

Four years have passed since the Socialist International held its last Congress in Berlin. We met then in a city which for decades had been divided and its inhabitants cut off from each other by a high and ugly wall. We rejoiced that that wall was no more, one-party rule was being swept away and a new Europe was being born.

The Berlin Congress will always call to our minds the memory of Willy Brandt, for 16 years the President of the Socialist International, who was so closely associated with that city. On a sad day not long after the Congress many of the SI's leaders were to meet again in Berlin, when we attended the funeral on 17 October 1992 of that great statesman and saluted his lifelong dedication to the ideals of our International. As we said at the Congress, where Pierre Mauroy was elected as the new President of the Socialist International, Willy Brandt's name will forever be linked to the history of our organisation.

Now our twentieth Congress takes place at the home of the United Nations, a venue symbolic of our commitment to international cooperation for peace, democracy and human rights. Our faith in its principles, our commitment to its aims and our pride in its record make it appropriate that our Congress is being held at the headquarters of the United Nations.

Our family of parties and organisations has grown in geographical scope and political influence in every part of the globe. Social democracy is a common denominator for those who seek progress, equality, solidarity and the affirmation of the rights of the individual and the community alike. Our work is informed by the great changes of recent years, not only the wave of democratisation in the 1990s, but economic globalisation, the stagnation of development in the poorest countries, the technology and communications revolution, the end of bipolarisation and the development of regional integration.

Democratic socialism is today inspiring and shaping political life on all continents. The International is a powerful force in Europe, where it was born and where social democratic forces have done so much to mould standards and expectations. It has long been, too, a powerful force in Latin America where over the last two decades our parties have played a central role in the

advance of democracy. It has continued to play an important part in the search for a durable peace in the Middle East. Increased exchange and cooperation among the countries around the Mediterranean has also been a priority.

In Central and Eastern Europe, after a long and painful period of silence, social democratic parties are active in every country, expanding their influence, presenting vigorous policy alternatives, and in some countries acceding to government. Meanwhile, both in Africa and in Asia and the Pacific, our well established member parties have been joined by many newly active or newly influential political forces of social democratic inspiration.

In this context the International has multiplied its efforts. Alongside our long established regional and thematic Committees, we have established in this period SI Committees for Central and Eastern Europe, Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and the Mediterranean, as well as a new Local Authorities Committee. We convened for the first time meetings of the SI Council in Japan, in Hungary, and in South Africa. We continued also to despatch fact-finding and election observation missions to every continent.

Through our many activities around the world, we are deepening and strengthening the exchanges between our member parties, as we work to evolve and develop our common platform and to bring the social democratic message to more and more places. We are convinced that many issues can today be tackled effectively on an international basis or not at all. This gives a new importance to the work of our International, whose founders were inspired by a vision of a global society and the ideals of worldwide solidarity.

I am pleased to present this report which summarises the main activities of our International during the period since our last Congress.

AFRICA

In Africa the Socialist International aims to provide a focus for all those who seek democracy, peace and development, and for whom economic development and democracy are inextricably linked. The International is growing apace in Africa, with numerous contacts and exchanges throughout the continent.

Not long before our last Congress in 1992 we held a large working meeting in Dakar, Senegal. As well as our own member parties in the continent, we invited as guests representatives of more than 30 African parties and organisations. With some of these we had longstanding contacts, while many had been recently founded in the climate of democratic change which

Africa had experienced in the previous two or three years. It was a successful and dynamic meeting, many of these parties attended the XIX SI Congress in Berlin, and since then the International has developed a significant presence and influence in Africa.

Parties of social democratic inspiration are now active in about 40 African countries, both in government and in opposition, some in circumstances of political and social progress, others in situations of oppression and hardship or conflict. They are leading governments, as in Senegal or Tunisia, Mali or Mozambique; they are minority parties in coalition governments, as in Malawi; they are leading parties of the opposition, as in Ivory Coast, the Central African Republic, Burkina Faso and Botswana; they are struggling to maintain political activity despite the most difficult conditions, as in Equatorial Guinea; they are courageously surviving bloodshed and disaster as in Rwanda.

Most of these parties are regular participants in the meetings of the SI Africa Committee, which was established by the SI Council at its meeting in Athens, early in 1993, and entrusted to the joint chairmanship of President Abdou Diouf of Senegal, Leader of the Socialist Party of Senegal, and António Guterres, Leader of the Socialist Party of Portugal. The Committee met for the first time in October 1993 in Lisbon, on the eve of our Council meeting there, and soon became a large and active body within the International.

ELECTIONS IN ANGOLA

SI activities in Africa have not, however, been restricted to meetings of our Committee. In September 1992, immediately after our last Congress, we organised an SI mission to observe the presidential and parliamentary elections in Angola. Our observers found the poll to be free, fair and correctly carried out, despite some organisational problems. They congratulated President José Eduardo dos Santos, the candidate of the ruling Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola, MPLA, on his re-election and the MPLA on its success in the parliamentary vote. Subsequent complaint of irregularities were not, in their opinion, well founded.

The International followed later developments in Angola with disquiet, focusing on the situation there at meetings of our Council and our Africa Committee, which were often attended by leaders of the MPLA. We deplored the renewed conflict which followed the elections and the refusal of UNITA to accept the results. We called for support for the peace talks held in Abidjan and later in Lusaka and for increased humanitarian aid to the people of Angola. Following the signing of the peace accords in Lusaka at the end of

1994, we held renewed hopes for national reconciliation. After many difficulties, the International has reiterated its commitment to work for a lasting peace. We shall continue to offer solidarity and support to all those working for a peaceful and democratic future in Angola.

MISSION TO SOMALIA

In a climate of deep international concern for the violent conflict and consequent famine in Somalia, which had led to the United Nations presence in that country, an SI delegation went to Mogadishu in February 1993. It was led by António Guterres, SI Vice-President and Leader of the Socialist Party of Portugal. We organised the visit in collaboration with the special representative of the UN Secretary-General in Somalia, whom the SI delegation met. They also met representatives of the UN Transitional Assistance Force and the UN Development Programme and travelled from Mogadishu to a reception camp sheltering 3,000 civilians, which was run by UNICEF and the Red Cross and protected by US forces.

António Guterres reported on the visit to the SI Council at its meeting a few days later in Athens. In a resolution, our Council welcomed the UN operation in Somalia, but recognised that there would be no solution to the conflict or recovery for the country without the effective disarmament of all factions, and financial and technical assistance from the international community going beyond temporary humanitarian relief. Sadly, despite the international action, more than three years later the situation in Somalia remains of great concern.

ELECTIONS IN SENEGAL

The Socialist International's longest-standing member party in Africa, the governing Socialist Party of Senegal, plays a leading role in the work of our organisation. In February 1993, the Party invited the International to send observers to Senegal's presidential elections - the first to be held under a new electoral code. A delegation representing several of our African and European member parties observed the voting in Dakar, St. Louis and other centres. They reported a calm and orderly voting process, despite some practical problems. President Diouf was decisively re-elected. The presence of international observers proved useful in the context of the application of the new electoral code, which was reviewed, with all-party support, before the legislative elections later that year.

ELECTIONS IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

International observers, including Guy Labertit of the French Socialist Party representing the Socialist International, were in the Central African Republic during the presidential and parliamentary elections of October 1993. Abel Goumba, the Leader of our member party, the Patriotic Front for Progress, FPP, was a presidential candidate and was narrowly defeated by Ange-Félix Patassé. Since then, political and social conditions in the Republic, where a multi-party system was established in 1991, have failed to improve. The FPP has denounced many abuses by the government and the ruling Movement for the Liberation of the Central African People, MLPC. Earlier this year, army mutinies led to the intervention of French forces and to an invitation from Patassé for opposition parties to join a government of national unity. This was refused by the FPP and others, in the absence of a commitment to constitutional reform. The situation is worrying and the International maintains close contact with its member party.

COUNCIL IN LISBON WELCOMES NELSON MANDELA

The face of Africa has been changed by the coming of freedom and democracy to South Africa. In October 1993 we welcomed Nelson Mandela as an honoured guest at the SI Council meeting in Lisbon. Some days previously he had asked the United Nations to lift economic sanctions on South Africa, after all-party negotiations set the country firmly on the path to democratic, non-racial elections. He voiced his appreciation of the role played by international solidarity in the struggle for democracy and stressed the need his country's fledgling democracy would have for development aid and investment in order to reverse the terrible legacy of apartheid.

Our Council pledged its best efforts to support the democratisation process and contacts with our friends and comrades in South Africa remained very close in the following months. SI President Pierre Mauroy and Vice-President António Guterres went to South Africa in December to gather information and reaffirm the support of the Socialist International for democratisation. They held meetings with Mandela and other ANC leaders, with President De Klerk, and with trade union, church and business leaders.

AFRICA COMMITTEE IN JOHANNESBURG

Shortly afterwards I was in Johannesburg myself to make arrangements for our Africa Committee to meet there. This historic meeting, in March 1993,

which was jointly chaired by Mamadou Faye, Socialist Party of Senegal, and António Guterres, Socialist Party of Portugal, was the first ever held by our International in South Africa. The delegation of the African National Congress was led by Thabo Mbeki and Walter Sisulu. Our meeting was a concrete expression of support for democracy in South Africa. It also underlined the importance of South African democracy for the whole continent and gave South African political leaders an opportunity for an exchange of views with those from other African countries on the continuing struggle for peace and democracy. The Committee affirmed the shared aims of democratic forces in Africa, especially political pluralism, media freedom, the advancement of women, and the defence of human rights, and agreed on a wide-ranging programme of activities.

ELECTIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA

A month later I returned to South Africa with a Socialist International delegation. We were among the many observers of the historic elections held on 26-29 April 1994. SI observers were at polling stations in Johannesburg and surrounding townships, in Pretoria, in rural areas of the Transvaal, in Cape Town and in many areas of the Western Cape. We met many ANC leaders and activists. Numerous representatives of SI member parties were also in South Africa in various observation and assistance roles. It was, for all of us who witnessed the calm and efficiency with which the poll was carried out, a very rewarding experience. The elections were a great victory for the ANC and its supporters throughout the world.

When President Mandela assumed office on 10 May 1994, the SI Council, meeting that day in Tokyo, paid tribute to the South African leaders and people as they began a new era and sent a letter to the new President with these words: *"We hope that the new South Africa will increase the possibilities of the whole continent - in particular those of southern Africa - to progress towards economic and social development and will strengthen regional cooperation in all domains. We commit ourselves to supporting the new South African government and increasing the financial cooperation of the international community as a way of helping the great majority of the population to fulfil their aspirations to higher standards of living"*.

ELECTIONS IN MOZAMBIQUE

Whilst the outcome of international efforts for peace in Angola and Somalia has not so far been as we would have wished, there have also been some

successes, as in Mozambique, where the many years of civil war are finally over. In October 1994, I headed an SI delegation to observe the long awaited elections for president and parliament. These marked the culmination of the UN-sponsored peace process, which we had strongly supported. We observed a poll in which voter turnout was high and procedures meticulous. We met the incumbent President and Leader of the Frelimo Party, Joaquim Chissano, as well as other party and government leaders. President Chissano was decisively returned to office, while Frelimo took the largest number of votes for the new parliament. We continue to support President Chissano's government in its difficult task of building a better future after the long ravages of war and maintain close relations with Frelimo, whose representatives regularly participate in meetings of the SI Council and Africa Committee.

AFRICA COMMITTEE IN IVORY COAST

In November 1994, the SI Africa Committee met in Abidjan, capital of Ivory Coast, at the invitation of our member party, the Ivory Coast Popular Front, FPI, and its Leader, Laurent Gbagbo.

At our meeting in Abidjan, which was well attended by representatives of SI member parties and by guests from all parts of Africa, we continued to focus on the democratisation process and the role of social democracy in Africa, and considered recent economic developments and the question of African integration. Also on the agenda were crucial questions of conflict resolution and humanitarian action. In a resolution on African integration, the SI Africa Committee stressed that regional cooperation and integration were vital if the African continent was to play its due role in international trade and the global economy.

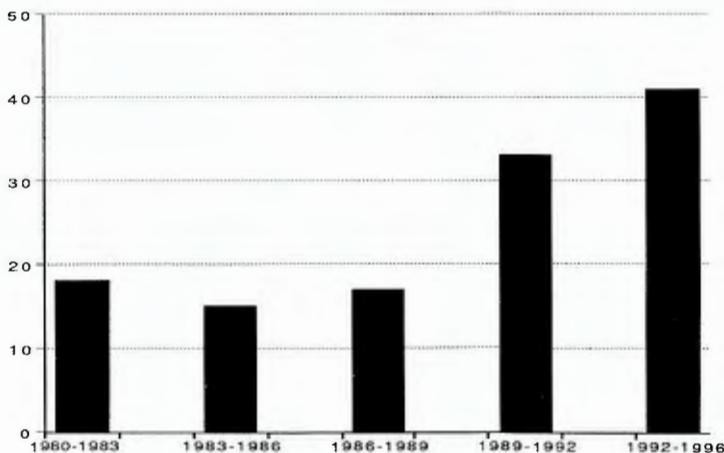
The Committee heard how in Ivory Coast, as in some other African countries, democratic transition was not complete. Gbagbo stressed the other reforms which needed to accompany the holding of multi-party elections: the adoption of a modern and unbiased electoral code, freedom of action and expression for opposition parties, and for the media. Presidential and parliamentary elections were scheduled to take place in Ivory Coast a year later, and these, unfortunately, confirmed the concerns voiced at our meeting. The opposition parties withdrew from the presidential poll of October 1995, citing the unfair electoral code and subsequent irregularities in the voting process. They later took part in the parliamentary vote, but voting was suspended, to the extreme concern of our International, in the constituencies of Gbagbo and of some other opposition figures. The Socialist International

has given its fullest support to the FPI and other parties working under such conditions. We believe that the solidarity manifested by events such as our meeting in Abidjan will help to foster greater democracy.

AFRICA COMMITTEE IN CAPE VERDE

Praia, capital of Cape Verde, was the venue for the next meeting of our Africa Committee, held in May 1995 at the invitation of the opposition African Independence Party of Cape Verde, PAICV, our member party in that country. We continued to work on shared policy approaches which by now were well developed. We had before us detailed background papers on vital areas of debate: the conditions for democracy; economic development; conflict and peacemaking. The Committee's discussions laid the basis for the debates of our Council at its meeting shortly afterwards in Cape Town and ensured our ability to bring to the whole of the Socialist International the voice and priorities of African parties.

Our meeting was held in the national parliament in Praia and proceedings opened in the presence of members of the various political parties and other prominent national figures. Our debates focused on the role of social democracy in the democratisation process, and on the struggle against poverty and the development of alternative policies where social wellbeing and progress need not be sacrificed to fiscal discipline. We also looked at strategies for peacekeeping and peacemaking in Africa and adopted resolutions on the continuing crises in several African countries where peace and democracy have yet to be achieved.



Number of parties - SI members and guests - from Africa participating in SI activities in the last five inter-congress periods

COUNCIL IN CAPE TOWN

In contact with the ANC and South Africa's first democratic government, the SI Council convened in July 1995 in Cape Town - another historic first. ANC leaders, including President Mandela and Deputy President Thabo Mbeki, attended. It was a large meeting and a particularly happy and memorable occasion for all those among our delegates who had worked in the international movement against apartheid. The main theme of our discussions was 'Democracy, Development and Peace in Africa - Building democracy, Securing Economic Development, Advancing Social Justice'. Among those taking part were the Prime Minister of Mali and Leader of ADEMA-PASJ, Ibrahim Boubacar Keita; Pedro Pires, President of our member party, the African Independence Party of Cape Verde; Joseph Ki-Zerbo, Leader of the Party for Democracy and Progress, Burkina Faso; Plácido Micó, General Secretary of the Convergence for Social Democracy, Equatorial Guinea, and Feliciano Gundana, who was then General Secretary of Mozambique's Frelimo Party, along with leading representatives of many other African parties.

One of the main resolutions adopted by the Council in Cape Town was on the conditions for democratisation. We expressed full support for all those African democratic forces identified with political and trade union pluralism, a free and independent press, the promotion of women, young people and children, and the defence of human rights, particularly the rights of association and expression. And we pledged the International to promote training programmes to entrench a democratic culture, solidarity work and the exchange of experiences.

Another Council resolution dealt with Social and Economic Development in Africa, setting out the International's commitment to policies of social justice and fair development. We stressed the need to combat Africa's increasing poverty, and to promote regional integration and participation in the globalising world economy of a kind which might bring real benefit to ordinary citizens, as well as the obligation of the international community to honour and continue aid and cooperation commitments. The national situations in many African countries were equally a focus of concern, as I shall mention later in this report.

ELECTIONS IN MAURITIUS

In December 1995 I had the privilege of observing the general elections in Mauritius, at the invitation of our member party, the Mauritius Labour Party.

Labour and its coalition partner, the Mauritius Militant Movement, won a decisive victory and Labour Leader Navin Ramgoolam became Prime Minister.

AFRICA COMMITTEE IN BURKINA FASO

The most recent meeting of our Africa Committee was in February of this year in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, hosted by our member party there, the Party for Democracy and Progress, the largest opposition party, which had recently merged with a number of other groups on the left. SI President Pierre Mauroy was with us in Ouagadougou, and, as usual, the delegates of SI member parties from the region and from Europe were joined by many guests from other African parties. Our discussions continued to focus on strengthening the democratic processes and on peace and reconciliation in Africa, especially with regard to the grave events of the recent past in Rwanda and the threat of similar developments in Burundi. The Committee reaffirmed the Socialist International's commitment to work for the strengthening of democratic culture, particularly by its monitoring of elections and by supporting socialist and social democratic forces. This was ever more important, in the light of recent setbacks and the unsatisfactory conduct of elections in some countries.

Another focus of attention was the forthcoming Inter-Governmental Conference (IGC) of the European Union. A resolution of the Africa Committee urged the Union to take due account in the preparations for the IGC of relations with developing countries, and with Africa in particular, and urged the International's member parties in the EU to ensure that this became a priority.

Our meeting in Ouagadougou, like the previous meetings of our Committee, was a significant forum for the exchange of experiences by parties from all over the continent. By providing such a forum, the Committee has an important role in moving forward the social democratic agenda in Africa. A number of specific plans and commitments arose from our discussions. One project, to be coordinated by the leadership of the PAICV, Cape Verde, is to develop the common work of social democratic parliamentarians. Members of parliament from new democracies in Africa are to be invited to participate. Another priority is to assist with political education and training, and the PDP, Burkina Faso, is coordinating preparations for a series of workshops for African parties on this subject.

SUPPORTING EFFORTS FOR PEACE...

On many occasions, in the meetings of the SI Council and Africa Committee, we have focused on urgent questions of peace, human rights and democracy in Africa.

Perhaps the most grave and shocking of all was the savage civil war in Rwanda which claimed hundreds of thousands of victims. The Socialist International welcomed the international action, and the subsequent establishment of a pluralist government led by the prime minister previously appointed in 1993 under the failed Arusha Accords. We gave our full support to Rwandan democrats, in particular the Social Democratic Party, which is a member of the government, in rising to the challenges of national reconciliation and reconstruction.

Repeatedly since 1994 the SI Council and Africa Committee have recalled with emotion the terrible events of the civil war and called on the international community to do all in its power to assist Rwanda's government in reconstruction, whilst condemning the continued impunity of those responsible for the genocide. The continuing reprisals, which have been widespread in some areas of the country, are a cause of grave concern and still hinder the return of Hutu refugees to Rwanda. We continue to follow the situation closely, and are in regular contact with the Social Democratic Party, whose representatives attend meetings of our Council and Africa Committee.

Meanwhile, the Socialist International is also extremely concerned about the deteriorating situation in Burundi, where similar explosive tensions exist between the different ethnic communities and many have already met violent deaths. We support all international conflict-prevention initiatives, including that led by Julius Nyerere on behalf of the Organisation of African Unity, and are dismayed by the recent coup in Burundi and the apparent refusal of its leaders to cooperate with the international community.

...AND DEMOCRACY

The Convergence for Social Democracy, CPDS, of Equatorial Guinea has been an active contributor to our meetings over these last few years, as we followed with concern events in that country. In its resolutions, the SI Council has deplored the conduct of President Teodoro Obiang's government and the repression of the political opposition. In the municipal elections of 1995 there was evidence of irregularities, and the lack of conditions for a free and fair election led to an opposition boycott of this year's presidential poll.

Good contacts were established with the Democratic Alliance of Malawi,

whose leader Chakufwa Chihana has attended meetings of our Council and Africa Committee. After the country's first democratic elections in 1993, the Democratic Alliance joined a coalition government. I can also mention, among many others, the Social Democratic Front, the leading opposition force in Cameroon.

In many meetings of the International concern was expressed about the situation in Togo, where the democratisation process begun in 1991 has not moved forward; in Niger, where the democratically elected government was removed this year by a military coup, and in Zaire, where chaos and violence continue to prevail. The lack of progress in democratisation in Gabon, in Mauritania and in Kenya has also been a cause of concern. We maintain close contacts with democratic forces in all these countries.

The SI Council has repeatedly expressed its shock and outrage at events in Nigeria, where Social Democratic Party Leader Massood Abiola has been in detention since shortly after the elections of 1993. We have called for the international isolation of Nigeria's military regime. The execution last year of Ken Saro-Wiwa and other minority rights campaigners was condemned in the strongest terms by the SI Council, meeting last December in Brussels.

The democratic socialists who are working under difficult and dangerous conditions in many African countries are particularly in our minds and have the full solidarity of the Socialist International. We see in Africa today great cause for concern, but equal cause for hope. In this context, the Socialist International's commitment to that continent assumes particular importance. We can be confident that the members of our Africa Committee, after three years' intensive work, will ensure that the resolutions of our XX Congress fully reflect that commitment.

ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

With the rapid economic growth and increasing economic and political weight of Asia and the Pacific, the further strengthening of our work in that part of the world has been particularly important in the last few years. The International's commitment is to ensure that economic development goes hand in hand with progress in democratisation, in social welfare, and in the defence of civil and human rights. In many countries of Asia and the Pacific these challenges are being taken up by SI member parties and other political forces with which we are in close touch.

In 1993 we established for the first time a Socialist International

Committee for Asia and the Pacific. Together with a meeting of our Council in Tokyo and other events in the region, this became the focus of considerable activity. Our priorities have been to help strengthen democratic development in countries where that is already under way, to give solidarity to those still struggling for basic democratic freedoms, and to support social democratic forces, and especially newly developing parties. Our presence has been warmly welcomed and our member parties and longstanding friends in the region have been joined at SI meetings by many newly active or newly influential parties of social democratic inspiration.

ELECTIONS IN CAMBODIA

In line with our support for the peace process and the United Nations operation, the Socialist International sent a delegation to observe the general elections held in Cambodia in May 1993. This was organised in collaboration with the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia, UNTAC. Our observers followed the voting process in the capital, Phnom Penh, and in several other provinces, and they met leaders of the political parties and members of the UN authorities, including the Special Representative, Yasushi Akashi. They concluded, in accord with the United Nations and with other international observers, that despite some technical limitations and media restrictions, and despite the threat of violence which had continued in the run-up to voting, the elections were free and fair. They were particularly happy to see the high voter turnout, demonstrating the strong democratic commitment of the Cambodian people. We continue to follow the situation in Cambodia, where, alongside positive developments, the threat of violence and other difficulties persist. Contacts with the main political parties, which subsequently formed a coalition government, have been maintained and we regularly welcome guests from Cambodia at SI meetings.

ASIA-PACIFIC COMMITTEE IN KATHMANDU

An occasion of particular note was the first meeting of the SI Committee for Asia and the Pacific, held in Kathmandu, Nepal, in December 1993. This was hosted by our member party, the governing Nepali Congress Party, and addressed by the then Prime Minister G P Koirala, who is now President of the Congress Party. It was an opportunity to celebrate the success of democratic forces in Nepal and the Congress Party's election to government, and to reaffirm our solidarity with Nepali colleagues in the task of guiding social, political and economic progress in a country where extreme poverty and

underdevelopment were the legacy of authoritarian rule. The intervening years have not been easy ones for our members in Nepal, but the Party is now again in government, under the new Prime Minister, Sher Bahadur Deuba. The Nepali Congress Party is an important force for social democracy in the Asia-Pacific region and an active participant in our work.

The participants at our meeting in Kathmandu, who included many guests, as well as SI member parties from the region and elsewhere, gave a warm welcome to the establishment of our Committee and expressed their wish to actively participate in this new body. Our agenda focused on peace, democracy and human rights in Asia and the Pacific, and on developing a common social democratic platform for the region. The new Committee affirmed its commitment to passing on the message of democratic socialism to those countries where communist-led regimes were still in power. It stressed that human rights would be a paramount concern, and women's rights in particular. So too would economic questions and the continuing development of a democratic socialist perspective in the Asia-Pacific region, emphasising the interdependence of economic and social progress.

COUNCIL AND ASIA-PACIFIC COMMITTEE IN TOKYO

Following the very successful inaugural meeting of our Asia-Pacific Committee, it was decided, at the invitation of our member parties in Japan, to hold the next SI Council meeting, in May 1994, in Tokyo. In Japan, following the elections held earlier that year, both the Social Democratic Party and the Democratic Socialist Party, after nearly fifty years in opposition, had joined a coalition government.

In Tokyo the International fulfilled a longstanding aim of holding a meeting of its Council in Asia. It was an important opportunity to build on activities and contacts in the region. An unprecedented number of Asian parties and organisations attended the Council and the meeting of our Asia-Pacific Committee which preceded it. In his opening remarks, SI President Pierre Mauroy said, *"We believe that the social democratic model is not just a European one. It has taken root in other continents and been successful. We think that it can offer... Asian powers a social and political perspective which corresponds to a high degree of development"*.

Among the leaders of our member parties taking part in the debates were SI Vice-President Makoto Tanabe, Social Democratic Party of Japan, together with the Party's Leader, Tomiichi Murayama; Keigo Ouchi, Leader of the Japan Democratic Socialist Party; Helen Clark, Leader of the New Zealand Labour Party; Norberto Gonzales, Leader of the Philippines Democratic

Socialist Party, and Radnaasumberel Gonchigdorj, Leader of the Mongolian Social Democratic Party, as well as representatives of the Australian Labor Party, the Fiji Labour Party, the Democratic Action Party of Malaysia and the Nepali Congress Party. Distinguished guests included Sheikh Hasina, Leader of the Bangladesh Awami League, who has since been elected Prime Minister; the Second Prime Minister of Cambodia, Hun Sen; Win Khet, Chair of the National League for Democracy, Burma, and delegates from India, Laos and Azerbaijan.

The discussions focused on Democracy and Economic and Social Development in the Asia-Pacific Region and on Regional Security. In its resolutions, our Council welcomed increasing democratisation in Asia, but voiced deep concern about the persistence of repressive regimes and denial of human rights in a number of countries. It called for economic growth in the region to be accompanied by policies that promoted employment and more equal distribution of wealth. And it stressed the need for new structures of security and economic cooperation.

ASIA-PACIFIC COMMITTEE IN MANILA

At the next meeting of the SI Asia-Pacific Committee, held in February 1995 in Manila, and hosted by our member party there, the Philippines Democratic Socialist Party, Makoto Tanabe of the Social Democratic Party of Japan was elected Chair of the Committee. We also elected two Vice-Chairs, Maryan Street, then President of the New Zealand Labour Party, and Senator Kamal Azfar of the Pakistan People's Party. It was our first meeting in the Philippines, but the Socialist International was no stranger to the country, having supported the aspirations of the Filipino people for democracy over many years and been present at the first democratic elections, before welcoming the PDSP as a member in 1992.

The Committee focused on the progress of democracy, on strengthening social democracy, and on priorities for our future work in Asia and the Pacific. Alongside the gains for democracy in the region, we highlighted the democratic deficit in some countries, as well as the links between economic, social and democratic development. We reaffirmed our commitment to the concept of human rights as universal and indivisible, and to the principle of peaceful settlement of international conflicts, and we welcomed the efforts for intra-regional cooperation and understanding within such fora as ASEAN and APEC.

Also on our agenda were the important questions of relations with countries under communist party rule, and the sharing of information and

experiences on election campaigning. For each of these areas a special working group of the Committee was established.

The new Chair of our Asia-Pacific Committee set out some priorities for its work: *"There are areas where we need to continue our efforts to build peace. It is our duty to continue doing so. We have friends engaged in a long struggle for democracy. We need to spread the importance of democracy even to those nations with antiquated institutions which disregard human rights. The discrepancies in lifestyle within developing economies run counter to the aspirations of countries for modernisation. Peace, democracy and progress must be promoted together"*.

SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRATS IN BURMA

Since 1990, when Burma's National League for Democracy was denied the right to govern after its overwhelming election victory, the Socialist International has been in close touch with leading members of the NLD, many of whom have been imprisoned or exiled, while their Leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, suffered nearly six years of house arrest in Rangoon. At our meeting in Manila we again had with us comrades from Burma who spoke movingly of the serious repression in their country and appealed for maximum solidarity.

At its meeting in Tokyo in 1994 the SI Council condemned the refusal of the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) to hand power to the elected representatives of the National League for Democracy, the systematic use in Burma of torture, summary executions and forced labour, and the restrictions on fundamental freedoms of expression and association. It called on the international community to withhold development aid and impose trade and investment sanctions as long as this situation continued. In Manila our Asia-Pacific Committee reiterated those sentiments and agreed on the sending of a high-level SI mission to Rangoon. Regrettably, the members of our delegation, which planned to visit Rangoon in June 1995, were denied visas to enter Burma. The International strongly protested against this decision of the SLORC and remains determined to send an official delegation to Burma.

As the SI Council met in Cape Town in July 1995, we heard the good news of Aung San Suu Kyi's release from house arrest. The International rejoices with its Burmese friends that she is no longer detained, but deplores the lack of further positive developments in Burma. At its last meeting at the end of 1995 in Brussels, our Council noted that the SLORC had not complied with any of the issues raised on previous occasions by the Socialist International. It reiterated support for Aung San Suu Kyi and the National League for

Democracy, urgently called on the SLORC to engage in meaningful dialogue with Aung San Suu Kyi, appealed to the international community and UN agencies, as well as foreign companies, to refrain from cooperation with Burma, and called for a boycott of tourism to Burma.

REGIONAL MEETING ON NUCLEAR TESTING

An extraordinary meeting of the SI Asia-Pacific Committee was convened in September 1995 in Sydney, in the light of the grave concern felt by all in our International about the announcement by the conservative French government that it would resume nuclear testing in the South Pacific. The Australian Labor Party were our hosts and the Foreign Minister, Gareth Evans, and Environment Minister, John Faulkner, took part, as well as the former Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam, and many members of the ALP leadership. Leading representatives of almost all our parties in the region attended, together with a number from European parties. The Committee heard reports of the global opposition and protests at the tests, many of which had been led by our member parties in the region, and a resolution was adopted which called on France, China and other nuclear-weapon states to desist from any further nuclear tests, to honour the decision to extend indefinitely the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and to fully participate in the pre-negotiations on a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. Unfortunately, the tests at Mururoa Atoll subsequently went ahead. However, the worldwide opposition no doubt contributed to the early curtailment of the programme and the French government's later decision to endorse a nuclear-free Pacific.

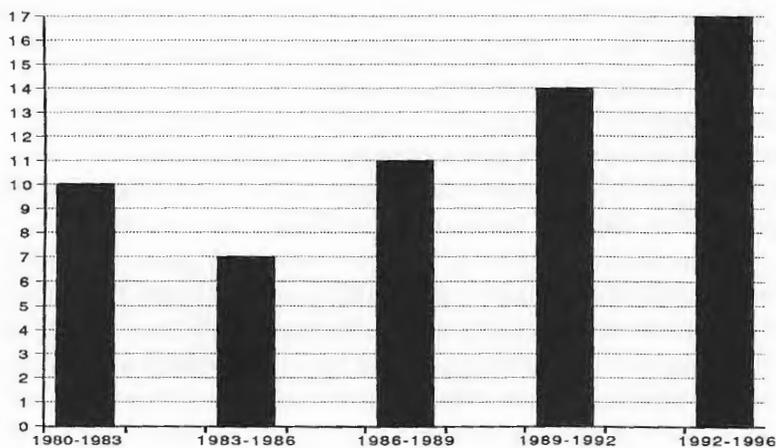
The Committee also took the opportunity of its meeting in Sydney to review other regional situations, and to reiterate the International's previous calls for a ban on the manufacture and sale of landmines - an issue particularly affecting some countries in Asia.

ASIA-PACIFIC COMMITTEE IN TOKYO

The most recent meeting of this new regional Committee took place in Tokyo in June 1996, hosted by the Social Democratic Party of Japan. It reviewed the International's perspectives on security, economic development and human rights in Asia and the Pacific, welcoming increasing integration in the region, on both the economic and security fronts, but noting, equally, the environmental, energy and food crises of the region and the continuing dominance of authoritarian rule in some areas. Ongoing nuclear tests by China were an urgent concern, with a strong demand for Beijing to stop

further testing.

The Committee reiterated its urgent demands for change in Burma and for international pressure on the regime there, in the continuing absence of positive developments. We also focused on the charges faced by Lim Guan Eng, the Deputy General Secretary of the SI's member party in Malaysia, the Democratic Action Party. Along with other DAP leaders, Lim Guan Eng was detained without charge or trial under the Internal Security Act from 1987 to 1989. He now faces charges of sedition and defamation which his party reports are entirely politically motivated. We called for the withdrawal of these charges. Our member party has the International's fullest support as it tries to carry out its work as a major opposition party in the face of constant difficulties and harassment.



Number of parties - SI members and guests - from the Asia-Pacific region participating in SI activities in the last five inter-congress periods.

URGENT ISSUES

Our Council and our regional Committee have considered on a number of occasions the situation in Fiji. Ever since our member party, the Fiji Labour Party, was ousted from government by a military coup in 1987, we have remained in close touch with the extremely worrying state of affairs in that country and repeatedly condemned the abuse of human rights and in particular the racism entrenched in the present constitution. A process of constitutional revision is at present under way and the Socialist International strongly supports its member party in its work for real change.

The SI Council has expressed its support for all efforts by the United Nations to regularise through negotiations the situation in East Timor. The

huge loss of life since the territory's annexation by the Indonesian government, and the continuing violation of human and civil rights has been condemned by the International on many occasions. Extreme concern has also been expressed in our meetings about the violation of human and political rights in Tibet, Laos and Bhutan.

As I have mentioned, one of the priorities in this region has been security issues, and the situation of the two Koreas has been examined by our Asia-Pacific Committee, by the SI Peace, Security and Disarmament Council (SIPSAD) and by the SI Council. In 1993 the Chair of SIPSAD wrote to the governments of the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea expressing the readiness of our International to contribute in every way possible to ensuring peaceful development and cooperation in this area.

WELCOME DEVELOPMENTS

The region has seen many positive developments in this period. In 1993 our member party in Pakistan, the Pakistan People's Party, was elected to government, with Party Leader Benazir Bhutto as Prime Minister. The election of this new government, in a country where the state of human rights and the gross abuse of the due process of law had been a particular concern for the International in the preceding period, was warmly welcomed. We have followed closely the difficult challenges facing the PPP government. In 1994 I had the opportunity to visit Pakistan for talks with the Prime Minister and PPP Leaders. The PPP takes a very active role in our Asia-Pacific Committee.

Just recently a coalition including our member party, the Mongolian Social Democratic Party, has been elected to government in that country which emerged just a few years ago from long Soviet rule and faces all the challenges of democratisation, social, political and economic development.

In India, where the centre-left has returned to government after the recent elections, we look forward to close and productive contacts, in particular with Janata Dal, the party of Prime Minister Deve Gowda, whose representatives have been participating regularly in the work of our Asia-Pacific Committee.

We also warmly welcomed the recent election victory in Bangladesh of the Awami League, whose Leader, Sheikh Hasina, is the new Prime Minister. Representatives of the Awami League are regularly invited to our meetings, and we look forward to continuing these contacts now that the party is in government.

The International also welcomed the election to government of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party and contacts have been maintained with the party.

Today the Asia-Pacific region is the most dynamic area in the world - its developing countries growing twice as fast as the world average. Political forces of social democratic inspiration wish to see this rapid growth and development founded on respect for human rights and concern for social justice, the environment and peaceful regional cooperation. Our role in supporting and providing a forum for these forces is a major priority for the Socialist International today.

EUROPE

The last Congress of our International took place in the newly reunited city of Berlin, the ultimate symbol of the new Europe, reunited after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The great changes on this continent were at the heart of our deliberations, and at the heart of developing our perspective on the coming years. Since then the European scenario has continued to change and develop rapidly.

THE EUROPEAN UNION

Following the signature of the Maastricht Treaty, the European Community became the European Union - now enlarged by the membership of Sweden, Finland and Austria, and extended by association agreements with other European countries. The goal of an integrated, democratic and prosperous Europe has been central to the Socialist International's work. We want to see a strong European Union which benefits all its members, with increasing democratic and popular involvement, high levels of employment and prosperity; a Union whose economic development is balanced by social and environmental considerations; a Union which can play an important role for worldwide peace and disarmament and just North-South relations. And we want to see fair and productive cooperation between the EU and its neighbours to the East and the South, leading to well-prepared enlargement of the Union.

This vision, which is common to all the social democratic parties of the Union, has made the collaboration of those parties within the EU structures an important priority. In 1992, the SI President and myself were present at the founding Congress of the Party of European Socialists - an unprecedented initiative by a group of SI member parties to join together for their work at the European level. The PES, which includes all the SI parties in the European Union and in other European countries with which the Union cooperates, is

an Associated Organisation of the International.

The directly elected European Parliament is crucial to the development of a more democratic and people-centred Union. The last European elections, in 1994, confirmed the Group of the PES as the leading political force in the Parliament, where it plays a vital role in the construction of a new Europe. The Group is also an Associated Organisation of our International. We are particularly pleased that cooperation with both the PES and the PES Group has become extremely close and productive. The SI President and Secretary General are invited to the regular summits of the PES leaders, which customarily precede the twice-yearly summits of the European Union. The leaders and other representatives of the PES and the PES Group attend all our SI Council meetings, participate in many of our Committees, and regularly join in SI fact-finding and election observation missions to different parts of the world. This close relationship was further cemented when the PES Group hosted an SI Council meeting at the European Parliament in Brussels last December.

ELECTORAL DEVELOPMENTS

As amply evidenced by the two preceding chapters of this report, democratic socialism can no longer be characterised as largely a European phenomenon. It is, however, a huge and influential political force in today's fast-changing Europe. In many European countries, our member parties are in government - either alone or in coalition - and where they are not, there is every hope that they will soon return to office.

Since achieving its highest ever vote in 1992, the Irish Labour Party has been part of two successive coalition governments. Also at the end of 1992, the Social Democratic Party of Denmark returned to power at the head of a coalition, with Party Leader Poul Nyrup Rasmussen as Prime Minister. In 1993 the late Andreas Papandreou led the Panhellenic Socialist Movement, PASOK, back to power.

Also in 1993 the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party won its fourth successive election. In this year's poll, the PSOE sustained the narrowest of defeats and is determined that its period in opposition will be a short one. In Norway the Labour Party increased its support in the elections of 1993, to remain in government. The Netherlands Labour Party was successful in the 1994 elections and Party Leader Wim Kok took office as Prime Minister at the head of a coalition government. In Luxembourg the Socialist Workers' Party continues in coalition government after the elections of 1994. In Sweden the Social Democrats also won elections in 1994 and returned to government,

initially under Ingvar Carlsson, and since earlier this year under the new Prime Minister and Leader of the Social Democratic Party, Göran Persson.

The year 1995 saw the Finnish Social Democratic Party return to government, with Party Leader Paavo Lipponen leading a coalition. The two Socialist Parties of Belgium remained in the four-party coalition government after the elections of 1995. And our member party was elected to government in Portugal, with SI Vice-President António Guterres as Prime Minister. The Social Democratic Party of Switzerland also remained in coalition government; the party substantially increased its support in last year's elections and is now the largest party in parliament. In Austria too, our member party, the Social Democratic Party of Austria remained the largest party in the coalition government headed by our Vice-President Franz Vranitzky, after the 1995 elections. Most recently, in Italy the centre-left Olive Tree alliance, in which the Democratic Party of the Left, is the largest partner, won this year's elections after major realignments and reforms in Italian *political life*.

Meanwhile, the Social Democratic Party of Germany, though still in opposition, has increased its representation nationally and reinforced its position in the *Bundesrat* or Federal Council, reflecting its control of the majority of the governments of the *Länder* or States of the Federal Republic. In France the Socialist Party's candidate, Lionel Jospin, won the first round of the presidential elections in 1995 and lost the second round only narrowly. There are good prospects for the party's return to power before too long. The British Labour Party continues to strengthen its position, and, after long years of opposition, is approaching hopefully the elections due by 1997.

At the same time, there has been rapid growth in support for parties of social democratic inspiration in almost all the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Notable examples of this trend were the victory in 1994 of the Socialist Party of Hungary and the election in 1995 of the candidate of Social Democracy of the Republic of Poland, Aleksander Kwasniewski, as President of Poland, where his party was already taking part in a coalition government. In the Czech Republic, the Social Democratic Party has rapidly increased its support, and came a close second to the ruling Civic Democratic party in this year's elections. Meanwhile, in Romania, the Social Democratic Party, PSDR, and its coalition partner, the Democratic Party, were very successful in the recent local elections.

COUNCIL IN ATHENS

For its first meeting after the last SI Congress, our Council convened in

February 1993 in Athens, at the invitation of the Panhellenic Socialist Movement, PASOK. We were welcomed by PASOK's founder and Leader, Andreas Papandreou - a poignant memory, for as I write we are mourning Papandreou's death. Since our meeting in Athens he had led his party back to government in October 1993. Greece, and the Socialist International, have lost a towering political figure, but PASOK remains in government under a new Premier and Party Leader, Costas Simitis.

In Athens, our Council took as its theme Peace, Democracy and Economic Development, dealing with several critical national and regional situations where democracy and peace were at issue, and with international economic cooperation. We focused on countries around the world which were suffering conflicts and political repression: the former Yugoslavia, Angola, Pakistan, Haiti. Many of us, I am sure, recalled the time, only a generation ago, when Greece, like Spain and Portugal, had been in the grip of dictatorship, and its exiled leaders had attended our Council to muster solidarity with their cause.

Meeting in Greece, the SI Council was acutely aware of the conflict raging in the neighbouring republics of the former Yugoslavia - for the first time since the end of the Second World War, fighting in the heart of Europe. The Council addressed the serious developments there and adopted a resolution which emphasised the gravity of the situation and called for urgent action to prevent the spreading of the conflict to other parts of the Balkans.

COUNCIL IN LISBON

The Socialist Party of Portugal was the host of our next SI Council meeting, held in October 1993 in Lisbon and attended by many European party leaders. This was an occasion of particular optimism, where we welcomed as a special guest Nelson Mandela, then engaged in the negotiations which were soon to lead to democratic transition in South Africa. We welcomed too the Israeli Foreign Minister, Shimon Peres, who spoke on the historic peace agreement signed the previous month in Washington, and the Council discussed at length the progress of the peace process in the Middle East.

The main theme of our Council was the world economy. In its resolution, the Council emphasised the need for the European Community to adopt a new strategy for growth and employment, and urged the international community to programme more systematic aid to the process of economic reconstruction in Central and Eastern Europe.

We adopted a number of further resolutions on Central and Eastern Europe. In the first of these, the Council welcomed the result of the general elections in Poland, as evidence of the appeal of social democratic policies in

that country, and elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe.

We expressed deep concern about the situation in Russia, where an attempted coup against the government of Boris Yeltsin had resulted in dramatic clashes and loss of life in Moscow. It expressed satisfaction at the defeat of regressive forces, but deplored the resort to violence. It also called for the rapid implementation in Russia of a fully democratic system and for international assistance to political, social and economic reforms. It resolved to give full support to the forces of reform and to send an SI delegation to Russia in the near future.

The Council in Lisbon reiterated its strong support for the United Nations, the International Conference and all peacemaking efforts in the former Yugoslavia. It affirmed the International's full solidarity with the parties of social democratic inspiration in all the republics of the former Yugoslavia and appealed to democratic and left-wing forces everywhere to coordinate their efforts for strong political pressure aimed at a political solution to the war.

COUNCIL IN BUDAPEST

In December 1994 the SI Council met in Budapest. This was the first meeting of our Council in Central or Eastern Europe, and perhaps the most significant of all our meetings in Europe in recent years. Opened by the Prime Minister and Socialist Party Leader, Gyula Horn, and attended by representatives of more than 100 parties and organisations, many of them from that part of Europe, it was a gathering richly symbolic of the region's political and economic transformation.

The Council meeting took as its theme: 'Social Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe: Deepening Democracy - Developing an Efficient Economy - Promoting Social Justice', summing up the priorities of our International. It took place at a time of manifestly increasing support for those priorities in many countries of the region. Gyula Horn told the Council: *"the failure of the conservative right in Hungary was no accident. Right-wing conservative forces are falling one by one also in other countries in this region. Only a new left imbued with the spirit of Europe will be able to effectively build up a new system that is also sensitive to social issues"*.

Many party leaders from the region described in Budapest their trajectory in the preceding years. As Aloyzas Sakalas, Leader of the Lithuanian Social Democrats, said, *"for almost 70 years the ideals of equality, social justice, labour and freedom in this region were utilised as a cover for a brutal totalitarian system"*. The leaders described the widespread disillusion with public provision and the workings of the state, the high expectations of the all-powerful market

encouraged by politicians and ideologues of the right, and the quickly evident reality - alongside many real and encouraging gains - of social and economic polarisation, increasing unemployment, poverty and insecurity. Meanwhile, democratic socialist parties in the region had consistently presented the view, summed up by Milos Zeman, Leader of the Czech Social Democratic Party, that *"economic growth should lead toward a higher quality for life for all"* and that *"social justice does not mean an egalitarian society, but a society of solidarity"*. The electoral victory of the Hungarian Socialist Party was not an isolated episode, we concluded; in Poland, Lithuania and elsewhere, people had begun to vote against the numerous injustices caused by right-wing policies and an untrammelled free market, and in favour of a fundamental right to social justice and solidarity. By December 1994, social democratic parties were growing stronger in almost every country of the region, and we can now see how this trend has continued.

Emphasis was also placed at our Budapest meeting on the role of Central and Eastern Europe in the future of the whole continent, the importance of economic cooperation and cooperation in the field of security, the desirability of opening the European Union to all countries which wished to join, and the need for a Europe-wide approach to issues of minorities, immigration and asylum. The Socialist International's commitment in Central and Eastern Europe was evident in the large attendance, the growing optimism and the consensus of views expressed at our Budapest meeting.

COUNCIL IN BRUSSELS

Most recently, our Council met in December 1995 in Brussels. The meeting was hosted by the Group of the Party of European Socialists in the European Parliament and took as its theme: 'The New Europe in an Interdependent World - the Democratic Socialist Perspective'. It was opened by Pauline Green, Leader of the PES Group and an SI Vice-President, and addressed by many European leaders. Their message was exemplified by our First Vice-President, Gro Harlem Brundtland, the Prime Minister of Norway. Brundtland spoke of a historic mission to develop European integration. She also spoke of Europe's millions of unemployed and of the disaffection of many young people from the political process, and how hard it was, in this context, even with the tools of the information and communications 'revolution', to mobilise support for a shared European project.

Our resolution stated that *"a strong European Union can play its full role on the international scene in promoting peace and disarmament in cooperation with third countries... In a fast moving world, the European Union is a unique, innovative*

body of cooperation and conflict resolution, that has learned the lessons of history and is prepared to change and mould its structures and administration in order to face in a better way its problems of cohesion, of unemployment, of monetary union, of social distress or environmental degradation and become a motor in promoting social justice, economic development and respect for human rights, freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination within its borders and across the world".

We called for strong leadership at the European level to launch a solid policy for economic renewal, with employment as a priority, and equally for a policy of solidarity towards Central and Eastern Europe, the Mediterranean, the Americas and especially towards Africa.

Among the party leaders present at the SI Council meeting in Brussels was John Hume, Leader of the Social Democratic and Labour Party of Northern Ireland. SI President Pierre Mauroy underlined the support of our International for the work of John Hume and the SDLP, together with those of the Irish Labour Party and its Leader, the Foreign Minister of Ireland, Dick Spring, and of the British Labour Party, to put an end to the long conflict in the island of Ireland.

Another longstanding concern, to which we have returned at recent Council meetings, is the unresolved conflict and division in Cyprus. The International welcomed the European Union-Cyprus agreement of 1995, which, our Council stressed, makes even more compelling the need for a settlement to the conflict. The SI has expressed its support for United Nations efforts to reach an agreement in Cyprus based on justice and respect for international law.

SI COMMITTEE FOR CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE (SICEE)

By 1992 the Socialist International had re-established the membership of its historic parties in Bulgaria, the then Czecho-Slovakia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia and Lithuania, and also accepted into membership the Hungarian Socialist Party and the Social Democratic Parties of Albania and Slovenia. Other historic parties in the region were also rebuilding their activities and taking an active part in the International, and contacts were already developing with many more newly formed parties of clearly social democratic orientation. The region's rapid economic and political transformation was a central concern of our organisation. A logical development, therefore, was the establishment the following year of a Socialist International Committee for Central and Eastern Europe (SICEE). The Committee met for the first time at the SI Secretariat in London in May 1993. It elected two Co-Chairs: Piero Fassino of the Italian Democratic Party

of the Left and Jirí Horák of the Czech Social Democratic Party

That first meeting was attended by delegates of the SI member parties in the region as well as those of other member parties, in Western Europe, the Middle East and North America, which wished to be involved in this important area of the International's work. They agreed to focus efforts on strengthening social democratic parties in Central and Eastern Europe and fostering cooperation amongst those parties. In addition to the regular meetings it would hold, the new Committee planned missions to establish and strengthen contacts in several countries.

At the first meeting of SICEE, as on many other occasions in that Committee and in our Council, we discussed the critical situation in the former Yugoslavia.

Our International had, from the first, warned of the problems and risks of resurgent nationalism in Central and Eastern Europe. In the resolution of our 1992 Congress, we stated: *"The SI vehemently defends the right of nations to self-determination, laid down in the Charter of the United Nations; however, now as in the past, the SI categorically rejects nationalism which leads to hatred, discord and war. The Socialist International reaffirms the necessity of combining the right to self-determination with strict respect for internationally established and recognised borders, and no modification of these borders by the use of force. Against this background, we are deeply concerned in particular about the developments in the former Yugoslavia, and we are outraged at the manifest war crimes committed there"*.

At our Council meeting in Athens in February 1993 we gave full support to the International Conference on the former Yugoslavia under the joint chairmanship of the United Nations and the European Community. We called for the whole international community to act together in this serious situation, for all parties to the conflict to take responsibility for making peace, and for priority to be given to humanitarian assistance. The Council expressed its outrage at the widespread disregard for human rights and international law, the systematic rapes, the killing of prisoners and bombing of civilians, and everything involved in the ugly practice of so-called 'ethnic cleansing', and stated firmly that those responsible must be brought to justice.

In Athens, Thorvald Stoltenberg of the Norwegian Labour Party, who had visited the former Yugoslavia in 1992 at the behest of the Socialist International, reported to the Council on the crisis, and shortly after that he was appointed Co-Chair, on behalf of the United Nations, of the International Conference. Our solidarity and support went with him as he undertook this extremely difficult task.

ELECTIONS IN SERBIA

In a statement issued shortly before the presidential and parliamentary elections held in Serbia and Montenegro in December 1992, we had stressed the opportunity for voters there to give their verdict against the war, and that this depended on the elections being carried out under correct conditions. In this context we decided to send an SI delegation to observe the poll. The SI observers went to the capital of Serbia, Belgrade, and several other areas. They drew attention to the control exercised by the party in power over the bulk of the economy, the entire national and regional administration, the state television network and the security forces and they also reported many instances of irregularities in the organisation of voting, such as lack of privacy for voters and unsealed ballot boxes. After the confirmation of victory for Slobodan Milosevic and the ruling Socialist People's Party of Serbia and Socialist Democratic Party of Montenegro, they viewed the immediate future with some pessimism.

ELECTIONS IN LATVIA

Meanwhile, the International continued to warmly welcome a much more positive picture of free, multi-party elections in many parts of Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Often these were the first ever such elections, or the first for many years.

In one such case, an SI delegation went to Latvia in June 1993, at the invitation of the Latvian Social Democratic Workers' Party, to observe the first fully free and fair elections held there since 1931. Our observers attended voting stations in the capital, Riga, and in other towns and concluded that voting was correctly carried out, although some issues of election procedure and, more importantly, of citizenship remained to be resolved.

MISSION TO POLAND

Following a recommendation of the SI Committee for Central and Eastern Europe, a Socialist International mission travelled in July 1993 to Poland, to gain information on the political and economic situation and the views of various political groups, to strengthen existing contacts and establish new ones, and to reaffirm the International's support for the democratic transition. They met the leaders of several political parties and trade unions. The visit took place shortly before general elections which were won by the Democratic Left Alliance, led by Social Democracy of the Republic of Poland, SdRP. That

government is still in office, and in 1995 Aleksander Kwasniewski, until then the Leader of the SdRP, was elected President of Poland. The International has developed close contacts with the SdRP, as well as with the opposition Union of Labour, UP, while retaining our historic links with the Polish Socialist Party, PPS.

SICEE IN LISBON

The SI Committee for Central and Eastern Europe met again in Lisbon in October 1993, on the eve of our Council meeting there. The Committee focused on a number of elections in the region, as well as on the continuing grave situation in the former Yugoslavia. It established a programme for continuing contacts with and between SI member parties in the region, and for the continuing expansion of new contacts with other political forces of social democratic inspiration. The Co-Chairs and other members of the Committee reported on numerous party congresses, regional conferences and seminars which they had attended. The Committee prepared draft resolutions on the elections in Poland, on the situation in Russia, and in support of peacemaking efforts in the former Yugoslavia. These were adopted by the SI Council.

ELECTIONS IN RUSSIA

In December 1993, parliamentary elections were held in Russia, together with a referendum on the constitution, and an SI mission to Russia was arranged to coincide with these. Our delegation was led by Herta Däubler-Gmelin, Vice-Chair of the Social Democratic Party of Germany. They had meetings with representatives of political parties and blocs and with candidates and officials of local electoral commissions in Moscow and St Petersburg. They observed the voting at a number of polling stations in Moscow and the nearby city of Podolsk. They noted that despite technical inadequacies, no doubt due to the short period of preparation, the voting process appeared free and fair, and reported that they had encountered sympathy for social democratic ideas within a number of political blocs.

SICEE MEETINGS IN BUDAPEST

Our regional Committee next convened in Budapest in May 1994, during the last days of campaigning for the second round of Hungary's general elections. The meeting was hosted by the Hungarian Socialist Party, MSzP, and the

Hungarian Social Democratic Party, MSzDP. A few days later, the MSzP emerged as the largest party and formed a new government, with the Party Leader, Gyula Horn, as Prime Minister. Discussions centred on the former Yugoslavia, as well as on the many elections taking place in Central and Eastern Europe and on furthering the Committee's intensive programme of contacts. Co-Chair Piero Fassino, in a report on recent developments in the region, described the current electoral processes as a second phase of transition, increasingly characterised by disillusion with the facile solutions of the right and growing support for social democratic ideas.

The Committee confirmed the importance of contacts with all social democratic forces in the former Yugoslavia and gave its continuing support to all efforts for peace, despite the great difficulties encountered by such initiatives. The members of SICEE met again in Budapest some months later, on the eve of the SI Council meeting held there in December 1994.

MISSION TO ROMANIA

In October 1994 a delegation of the Socialist International, led by SI Vice-President Philippe Busquin, Leader of the Socialist Party, PS, Belgium, went to Romania. They held talks in Bucharest with the leaders of the Romanian Social Democratic Party, PSDR (the successor of our historic SI-member party), the Democratic Party, the governing Social Democracy Party of Romania, SDPR, and several others. From this intensive programme of meetings they gained a very full impression of the political scene in a country still in the throes of political and economic transition. Informed by these discussions, and by our contacts with representatives of the Social Democratic Party and the Democratic Party who regularly attend SI Council and Committee meetings, the International has since continued to follow developments in Romania. The International welcomed in particular the results of the most recent local elections in June 1996, for which the Democratic Party and the Social Democratic Party formed a new electoral coalition, the Social Democratic Union, and achieved considerable success - another reflection of the increasing support for social democratic parties in Central and Eastern Europe.

SICEE IN PRAGUE...

Last year, our regional Committee again met twice, convening first in June 1995 in Prague, at the invitation of our members, the Czech Social Democratic Party. Led by Milos Zeman, the Czech Social Democrats have provided

vigorous opposition to the government of Prime Minister Vaclav Klaus. When we met in Prague our hosts reported an encouraging increase in popular support for the Party and this has since been confirmed by the general elections of May 1996, when they vastly increased their parliamentary representation and came a close second to the governing Civic Democratic Party.

In Prague more than 50 parties were represented, including our members from the region and elsewhere, and many other Central and Eastern European parties invited as guests. The large attendance clearly reflected the growing presence and influence of our International in that part of Europe and the Committee noted the increasing influence of parties of social democratic orientation on the pace and content of the transformation in countries formerly under communist rule. It also addressed the important question of links between Central and Eastern Europe and the European Union.

There were extensive discussions of the latest serious developments in the former Yugoslavia. Among the guests were representatives of several social democratic parties in Bosnia, Croatia and Montenegro, who stressed the good contacts between them and their strong support for a negotiated solution. The Committee adopted a resolution for peace in Bosnia, which condemned the incursions against safe areas and the kidnapping of UN peacekeepers and called for a common strategy by the international community in search of a real ceasefire and peace negotiations and the reinforcement of the UN peacekeeping force. These appeals were taken up by the SI Council when it met a few weeks later in Cape Town.

Another area of particular concern in Prague was the situation in Russia, particularly the conflict in Chechnya. The Committee passed a resolution which deplored the resort to military means in Chechnya and stressed the need for a political solution. Representatives of five Russian parties and organisations of social democratic orientation attended the meeting in Prague and invited the Committee to hold its next meeting in Moscow - a most welcome initiative.

...AND MOSCOW

The Committee reconvened therefore in November 1995 in Moscow - the first meeting of an SI body in Russia. There it focused on developments in Russia and the forthcoming elections, as well as on the continuing grave state of affairs in the former Yugoslavia. This was again a very well attended meeting. Representatives of all the main social democratic forces in Russia were

present, including the leaders of the Russian Social Democratic Union and other members of the Social Democratic Bloc, of the Social Democratic Party of Russia, and of the Party of Socially Oriented Democracy. The Committee also welcomed contributions from Mikhail Gorbachev and representatives of the city government of Moscow. Almost all our member parties in Central and Eastern Europe and a number in Western Europe were represented, along with guests from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Georgia, Moldova, Poland, Romania, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Ukraine. The continuing growth of our activities and contacts and of interest in the Socialist International in Russia and in the whole of Central and Eastern Europe was very evident. Whilst in Moscow for our meeting, I met the Prime Minister of Russia, Viktor Chernomyrdin.

The Committee adopted a resolution underlining the significance of the Russian parliamentary elections and calling for fair conditions and open access to the media for all electoral lists. It called on all Russian citizens to exercise their vote and expressed support for all those Russian democratic forces founded on the values of democratic socialism.

In a resolution on the former Yugoslavia the Committee welcomed the agreement on principles signed in Geneva in September 1995 and urged a number of specific measures by all sides to consolidate the ceasefire.

Events in Azerbaijan were the subject of concern and the Committee condemned the violations of human rights and political detentions, and especially the continuing imprisonment without trial of Aipara Aliyev, Deputy Chair of the Social Democratic Party of Azerbaijan, who was very ill and had been deprived of medical attention. Tragically, despite the intervention of the Socialist International and others, Mr Aliyev later died in prison.

VISIT TO ZAGREB, SARAJEVO AND TUZLA

Very shortly after our Moscow meeting, as a manifestation of support for the peace process in the former Yugoslavia, SI President Pierre Mauroy and myself, Jean-François Vallin, Secretary General of the Party of European Socialists, together with Michel Thauvin, Chef de Cabinet of the SI President, and Maurice Lazar, an Adviser to the President, visited Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. In Zagreb we met the leaderships of all the social democratic formations of Croatia: the Social Democratic Party the Social Democratic Union, and the Social Democratic Action, ASH. Travelling on from Zagreb to Sarajevo, we met there the leaders of the Social Democratic Party of Bosnia

and Herzegovina, the Union of Bosnian Social Democrats and the Citizens' Democratic Party of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as ministers of the Bosnian government and members of the collective Presidency, officials of the Croat National Council and the Serbian National Council, and officers of the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR). I then went on to Tuzla, where I met Selim Bezaglic, the Mayor of that city and Leader of the Union of Bosnian Social Democrats, and other members of the social democratic administration of Tuzla, representing both the UBSD and the SDP.

This was an invaluable opportunity to see the situation for ourselves and to appreciate the extent of the task of peacemaking and reconstruction now facing the Bosnian people, in which they clearly needed a great deal of international support and cooperation.

Meeting in Brussels a few weeks later, in December 1995, our Council welcomed with satisfaction the Dayton-Paris peace accords and the end of the siege of Sarajevo and urged all the parties to consolidate the ceasefire through the definitive end to any forced expulsion of peoples from their own territories, freedom for prisoners of war, and the possibility of free access and communication for civilians to and from each territory. We made a number of proposals for strengthening and supporting peace and reaffirmed the International's full commitment, and that of its member parties, to supporting the democratic and non-nationalistic forces in all the republics of the former Yugoslavia, *"and especially the social democratic and progressive parties whose presence is crucial in order to establish peace, common living and multi-ethnicity"*.

SICEE IN BRATISLAVA

Most recently, the Committee for Central and Eastern Europe met in July 1996 in Bratislava, at the invitation of our member party in the Slovak Republic, the Social Democratic Party of Slovakia and of the Party of the Democratic Left with which the International also has a strong relationship. The meeting expressed its firm support for these two parties and for the further strengthening of their collaboration. The Committee's agenda included an assessment of the recent elections in Albania, the Czech Republic, Romania and Russia, and the situation in the former Yugoslavia.

It reaffirmed the value of the Dayton-Paris peace accords for the former Yugoslavia and the International's long-held view that the only way to tackle the problems of the area was through conciliation and cooperation between the various communities and states. It noted with some satisfaction that the application of the accords had stopped the war from re-igniting. It went on to underline the importance of the elections held in Mostar. These could create a

precedent for the elections scheduled to take place in Bosnia in September 1996, which would be a crucial step towards the consolidation of peace. It stated that the international IFOR peace mission should be confirmed and stressed the importance of international funding for the reconstruction programme. Finally, it asked all the member parties of the Socialist International to actively support the parties and lists of candidates in all the republics of the former Yugoslavia which based themselves on non-nationalist and social democratic principles.

After examining the recent important elections in several countries the Committee passed a number of resolutions. It welcomed the normal holding of presidential elections in Russia, and the recognition of the election results by all political forces in the country, representing a further step in democratic transition, and urged President Yeltsin and the Russian Parliament - strengthened by a new electoral mandate - to end all military action in Chechnya and ensure a political and negotiated solution to the conflict.

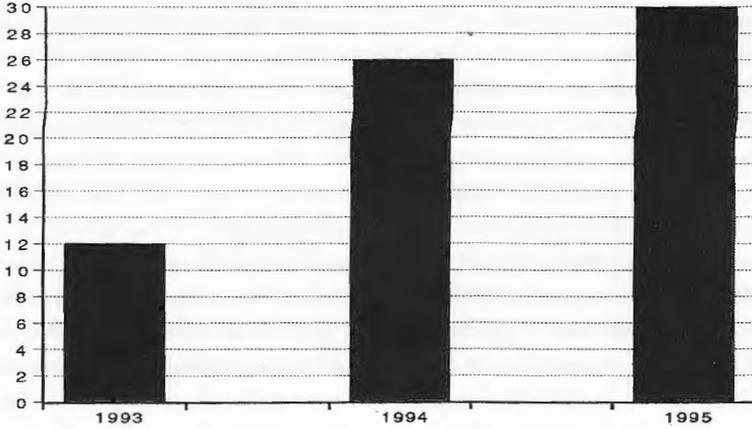
The recent outstanding electoral advance of the Czech Social Democratic Party was warmly welcomed, as were the good results obtained by the Social Democratic Party and the Democratic Party in Romania's recent local elections.

Deep concern, on the other hand, was expressed about the course and outcome of the recent parliamentary elections in Albania. These were held in a climate of tension and characterised by serious irregularities, which the International had repeatedly condemned. The Committee deplored the support of many European conservative parties for the governing Democratic Party of President Berisha, who had not hesitated to break democratic rules and principles. It called for new elections to be organised, with full respect for international democratic standards, as indicated by the report of the observers of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Our member party, the Social Democratic Party of Albania, has been the target of severe repression and its leaders - some of whom were barred from standing in the elections - subject to violence and detention. The International has protested to President Berisha about these abuses and will continue to follow the situation very closely.

Finally, in Bratislava, the SI Committee welcomed the creation in Bulgaria by the BSDP and the SDP of the Social Democratic Alliance, and expressed its wish to continue dialogue with all parties and movements in Bulgaria which draw their inspiration from the values of democratic socialism.

Reviewing the developments of the last four years, our Committee for Central and Eastern Europe welcomed the increasing influence of democratic socialist

ideas, reflected - as I have described - in the results of many recent parliamentary and presidential elections, and in the large number of parties which are seeking closer contacts and membership in the Socialist International.



Number of parties - SI members and guests - from Central and Eastern Europe participating in SI activities in the last three years

Parties from every country of Central and Eastern Europe and from many republics of the former Soviet Union have participated in recent meetings of SICEE and of the SI Council. Our regional Committee has played an important role in political dialogue and the exchange of information among parties, as has the European Forum for Democratic Solidarity founded by a number of Western European social democratic parties, with which SICEE cooperates closely.

The International's vision for Central and Eastern Europe is of a socially and environmentally responsible market economy and a democratic political and cultural system, reflecting the norms promoted by the European Union and other multilateral institutions, with the aim of an enlarged European Union. Clearly our cooperation with all those in the region who share this goal will be a very important part of our activities in the coming years.

THE MEDITERRANEAN

The Mediterranean has long been a significant focus in the work of our International and the SI Council in Athens in 1993, following the last Congress, decided on the establishment of a new SI Mediterranean Committee to coordinate and further develop our activities in that region. The Committee is chaired by Raimon Obiols of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party, PSOE, and brings together the SI member parties from the European, African and Middle Eastern countries surrounding the Mediterranean. It seeks to develop a common perspective on the major social, economic and political issues facing the region, to promote cooperation and exchange among the Mediterranean countries and with adjacent areas, and to put the region's concerns before the International as a whole.

During these years, the Mediterranean Committee, and the SI Council in a number of its meetings, have given particular attention to the new possibilities for regional development and cooperation, especially in the wake of the advances for peace in the Middle East, on the developing cooperation between the Mediterranean area and the European Union, as well as to a number of national situations, in particular that existing in Algeria since the suspension of the elections in 1991.

SITUATIONS OF CONCERN

"The cycle of violence, the disruption of the democratic process and the refusal of real dialogue increases the risk of civil war in Algeria... The stifling of political life has encouraged the dangerous development of fundamentalism and extremism of all kinds", the SI Council declared at its meeting in Lisbon in October 1993. It demanded "that the government begin negotiations with the democratic forces with a view to holding a national conference endowed with powers of sovereignty, and restore the exercise of democratic freedoms and respect for human rights".

At the first meeting of the SI Mediterranean Committee, held in December 1993 in Madrid, Hocine Aït-Ahmed, Leader of our member party in Algeria, the Socialist Forces Front, FFS, gave a detailed analysis of developments in his country and the Committee issued a statement condemning the violent attacks by armed fundamentalist groups, calling on the government of Algeria and all the political and social forces there to show, through dialogue, their willingness to re-establish civil peace and the democratic process through negotiations, and extending solidarity to the FFS and all democratic forces in Algeria.

The International continued to follow this situation closely and in the

absence of any improvement it remained an urgent priority when the Mediterranean Committee met in Naples in June 1995. Our Committee Chair Raimon Obiols led a delegation to Algeria just before the meeting. Hans-Jürgen Wischniewski, Chair of the SI Middle East Committee, had also visited the country earlier that year and attended the meeting in Naples. They reported to the Mediterranean Committee on their meetings with members of the government and leaders of the opposition parties. A significant development in 1995 was the meeting in Rome of a number of opposition parties, including the FFS, with the Islamic Salvation Front - outlawed since the aborted elections of 1991 - and the signature there of an agreement proposing a process of dialogue and transition in Algeria involving all parties. The government rejected these proposals and announced that it would proceed with presidential elections later in 1995, with or without the agreement of all political forces. Meanwhile, as FFS leaders reported to the Committee, violence had claimed more than forty thousand lives, and the economic crisis and poverty were growing. Our Committee called on all parties in Algeria to renounce violence and again stressed that the only solution was a political one. These sentiments were endorsed by the SI Council meeting in Cape Town in July 1995.

President Liamine Zeroual subsequently won the presidential election held at the end of 1995, but boycotted by a number of opposition forces including the FFS. The SI Mediterranean Committee, meeting in Barcelona in January 1996, stressed that popular participation in that election testified to the overwhelming desire of the Algerian people for an end to violence. It reaffirmed that this could only happen through a commitment to political pluralism and alternation of power, following dialogue with all political forces which rejected violence and terrorism. The Committee reaffirmed that the FFS and others in the democratic opposition have the fullest support of our International, which will continue to do all it can to promote democratisation and peace in Algeria.

A further cause of concern has been the persistent impasse in implementation of the United Nations peace plan for Western Sahara. Focusing on this issue at its 1995 meetings in Barcelona and in Malta, the SI Mediterranean Committee noted with concern the scaling down of the UN mission to Western Sahara due to the lack of agreement on electoral lists for a referendum on the territory's future. It called for a renewed effort to resume negotiations to end the conflict, as the only alternative to the threat of renewed hostilities. One serious consequence of the continuing stalemate in the area is the non-activity of the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA). Our Committee considers that the UMA plays an important role in economic

development and peaceful relations in the region and has called for urgent efforts to resolve the disagreements which are hindering its operation.

MEDITERRANEAN "AT A CROSSROADS"

Participants in the first meeting of the SI Mediterranean Committee, held in Madrid at the end of 1993, at the invitation of the PSOE, addressed the region's common history, but different cultural and religious traditions; the varying levels of democratic and social development, but the benefits which would accrue to all from increased economic and security cooperation.

Raimon Obiols, when he assumed the chair of the Committee at its meeting in Naples in June 1995, said the Mediterranean region stood at a crossroads; it must be seen not as peripheral to richer Northern Europe, but as a crucial strategic area for regional and inter-regional cooperation.

EURO-MEDITERRANEAN RELATIONS

Convening in Naples in June 1995, at the invitation of the Italian Democratic Party of the Left, PDS, our Mediterranean Committee focused at some length on the question of relations between the European Union and the Mediterranean area, with particular reference to the Euro-Mediterranean Conference which was due to be held in Barcelona in November 1995. The discussion was summed up in a resolution of that meeting which stressed the need to create a framework for Euro-Mediterranean relations on the lines of the policy already adopted by the European Union with respect to Central and Eastern Europe, and called for the allocation by the EU of the necessary budget to implement such a policy. In particular it urged the establishment of partnership agreements to create economic, commercial, financial and cultural exchanges capable of a real impact on the factors responsible for increasing poverty and under-development in Mediterranean countries.

FOLLOW-UP TO THE EU CONFERENCE

When the SI Committee met again in Barcelona in January 1996, it returned to the theme of relations between Europe and the Mediterranean. It warmly welcomed the Euro-Mediterranean Conference held the previous November, which had institutionalised links between countries on the Northern and Southern shores of the Mediterranean, and the increased priority to be given by the EU to such links.

The Committee had as its guest Manuel Marín, Vice-President of the EU

Commission. He reported that the Euro-Mediterranean Conference and its commitment to closer contacts were already bearing fruit, citing the EU's role in the organisation and observation of the Palestinian elections earlier that month. The SI Committee was pleased to hear that talks had begun on a proposed Euro-Mediterranean Stability Pact similar to that already signed by the EU and the Central and Eastern European countries, and that troops from Arab countries were stationed for the first time alongside NATO troops in Bosnia. He reported that a possible future Conference on Cooperation and Security in the Mediterranean was being discussed. Economic dialogue was also progressing well, with talks on EU economic agreements with Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and the Palestinian Authority, to be followed by Algeria and Syria, while links with Israel were already in place. The Commissioner also described the third and most complex area defined by the Euro-Mediterranean Conference: that of Society and Human Resources, including cooperation on such difficult questions as human rights, emigration, and the fight against terrorism and drug-trafficking.

In its resolution, the SI Committee recognised the importance of Euro-Mediterranean relations in all these areas. It stressed the organic link between the promotion of economic development in the countries of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean and the maintenance of conditions of peace, security, progress and democracy throughout the region, and called for the establishment in the whole of the Mediterranean region of a society based on respect for fundamental human, civil, cultural, economic and political rights.

The Committee welcomed the continued progress in the Middle East peace process, with the holding of the Palestinian elections. It also considered the situation of people in Iraq who were suffering as a result of international sanctions and urged the international community to respond positively to any sign that the Iraqi regime might agree to negotiations which could lead to the lifting of the embargo. It expressed support for the Arab Maghreb Union as an indispensable factor in regional cooperation. It called for improved trade relations between the EU and the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean - which implied a growth in exports from these areas to the EU. Concrete initiatives in economic cooperation and an innovative treatment by the EU of the foreign debt issue were also called for. Finally, our Committee stressed the importance of an organised framework for cooperation and, equally, of multiple contacts between countries among all sectors of society.

MEDITERRANEAN CULTURES, DEVELOPMENT AND DEMOCRACY

Convening most recently in July 1996 on the Mediterranean island of Malta, at the invitation of the SI-member Malta Labour Party, our Mediterranean Committee reviewed its work and the perspectives and priorities established. Our Malta declaration described the Mediterranean as *"An area of great potential and at the same time a focus of serious conflicts, in which the weight of history and tradition must have their place in our analysis, but must not prejudice our commitment to building a region of peace, cooperation and mutual understanding"*.

The importance of the region is now being recognised by the European Union, and the Committee pointed out that the resolutions of last year's Euro-Mediterranean Conference in many ways reflected the Socialist International's priorities, focusing as they did on cooperation to promote disarmament and arms limitation, human rights, democratisation, welfare and education, as well as economic cooperation. The EU initiative can count on the strong support of our parties. We called for speedier implementation of the economic aid and cooperation programmes decided at the Euro-Mediterranean Conference. The International has always in mind the enormous needs of the poorer Mediterranean countries for economic and social progress, greater educational opportunities and stronger international links. In their absence, fundamentalism and extremism feed on hardship and frustration.

We must work for policies to *"correct the historic inequalities which have kept us apart, so that we can offer a more balanced region to the present and coming generations"*, our Committee declared. It pledged itself to *"put the Mediterranean on the Socialist International's map"* and to continue generating new political proposals.

The Socialist International has strong member parties in many Mediterranean countries, including those in government in Greece, Italy, Tunisia and Egypt, as well as in many of the Northern European nations involved in the EU-Mediterranean initiative. The International and its Mediterranean Committee are thus already influential fora for the region. A major initiative will be the holding of an SI Mediterranean Conference next year. Our activity in this part of the world is set to intensify.

THE MIDDLE EAST

This was a period of important developments for the Middle East: of the historic peace agreements signed in 1993, but also sadly of tragic and violent deaths including that of our Vice-President Yitzhak Rabin. The Socialist International has spared no effort to assist the Middle East peace process, and in the last few years we continued that work intensively, through our Middle East Committee (SIMEC), which has long proved a valuable forum for dialogue between our member parties and others in the region, as well as through a multiplicity of visits and discussions.

In 1992, Israelis elected a new government led by the Israel Labour Party - with its Leader, Yitzhak Rabin, as Prime Minister - and also including our other member party in Israel, Mapam. In the following months, despite many setbacks, there were crucial developments in the negotiations between Israel and its Arab neighbours started in November 1991 in Madrid.

Our Middle East Committee continued to foster contacts and dialogue at all levels. At the invitation of the Social Democratic Party of Germany and the Committee's longstanding Chairman, Hans-Jürgen Wischnewski, it met in May 1993 at Bad Honnef, near Bonn. At that meeting the Committee elected for the first time two Vice-Chairs, Mohamed Abdellah of the National Democratic Party, NDP, Egypt, and Israel Gat of the Israel Labour Party. In support of the peace negotiations then taking place in Washington, representatives of the Palestine Liberation Organisation and the Crown Prince of Jordan, as well as of the United States, Russia and China were invited to join us. There was felt to be an opportunity for progress in the negotiations and our Committee sought as always, in frank and supportive discussions, to give every help and impetus to the process.

THE PEACE AGREEMENT

By the time the Middle East Committee and the SI Council met in Lisbon in October 1993, there was progress to celebrate. In September, the Israeli government and the PLO had signed an agreement in Washington on mutual recognition and on a declaration of principles on interim self-government for the Palestinians. The SI Council warmly welcomed the agreement as a first but significant step towards a permanent and comprehensive peace. Our meeting in Lisbon was a moment of pride and hope for all those who had worked for this. We looked back to the earliest efforts of the SI's leaders, Willy Brandt, Olof Palme and Bruno Kreisky, in the 1970s, as well as congratulating Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres and Yasser Arafat, the Israel Labour Party and

Mapam, the PLO, and the Norwegian government and labour movement, whose representatives had played an important role in facilitating the agreement, building on contacts first made through the Socialist International.

Our Council pointed out that *"all the joy and appreciation of this step aside, we must not forget the fact that the main tasks in promoting the peace process still lie ahead of us. All those who still reject the current peace process have to be convinced that things are going in the right way; the negotiations between Israel and Syria, Lebanon and Jordan have to be made to yield results; the first results of the negotiations between Israel and the PLO have to be implemented, and negotiations must continue"*. We stressed, moreover, that *"this peace can only make further progress if it goes hand in hand with rapid economic improvements"*. The International called for urgent financial help to the Palestinian territories, and for a deep international commitment to securing the resources and the political support for a future democratic and peaceful Middle East.

SIMEC IN BRUSSELS

In a climate of new hope and renewed determination, the SI Middle East Committee convened in February 1994 in Brussels. The meeting was attended by representatives of our parties in the Middle East and Europe, as well as of the PLO and the Crown Prince of Jordan. Speakers from the Israel Labour Party and Mapam, the PLO, Jordan, and the Progressive Socialist Party, our member party in Lebanon, reported on the peace negotiations, and the delegate of the National Democratic Party of Egypt also briefed the meeting on the views of his party. We again underlined the importance of agreements involving Lebanon, Syria and Jordan for the achievement of a full peace, and it was agreed that talks and exchanges would continue with Jordanian representatives and would also be held with representatives of the Syrian government.

On the second day of this meeting, we focused on economic support for the peace process, with a contribution from Juan Prat, the European Commission's Director-General for North-South relations. The Committee welcomed his report on the active participation of the European Union in both bilateral and multilateral channels of the Middle East peace talks, including working parties on regional economic development, water, the environment, refugees and security questions. The crucial nature of economic support both from international institutions and from national governments was stressed. Members of our Committee also pledged support for grass-roots contact and cooperation projects which could help to build confidence

within the region.

Tribute was paid to the Norwegian Foreign Minister, Johan Jørgen Holst, who had worked tirelessly for the peace process and who sadly had died suddenly a few weeks before.

SIMEC WORKING GROUP ON THE KURDISH QUESTION

At its meeting in Brussels SIMEC also discussed the continuing grave situation of the Kurdish people and agreed to establish a working group to study this issue. The group elected Conny Fredriksson of the Swedish Social Democratic Party as its Chair and undertook a programme of meetings and visits in the ensuing months. In all its discussions the working group stressed that any solution to the Kurdish problem had to be a political one and to be kept within the existing borders of states, and it condemned all forms of terrorism.

Developments affecting relations between the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and the Kurdistan Democratic Party were a cause of grave concern to the International, which had longstanding fraternal contacts with both parties. On behalf of the SI, Conny Fredriksson and Karim Pakzad of the French Socialist Party travelled to Northern Iraq in June 1994 for talks with the leaders of both parties, who subsequently thanked the SI for this initiative and demonstration of the International's concern. Unfortunately, the situation between the two parties has since deteriorated further.

The working group met in Stockholm in May 1994, in Paris in July 1994, in Ankara in December 1994, in Vienna in March 1995 and in Copenhagen in June 1995. The situation of the Kurdish people, in particular in Iraq, Iran and Turkey, was examined in discussions to which Kurdish personalities and representatives of Kurdish parties from all those countries were invited. The working group presented its report to the SI Council meeting in Cape Town in July 1995, in which it underlined the international nature of the Kurdish question and the need for a satisfactory solution to the problems of more than 20 million Kurds as a prerequisite for stable development in the countries of the region. Progress demanded better conditions for democracy and a recognition of the Kurdish identity, the report indicated. A resolution was adopted in Cape Town on the democratisation process and the Kurdish question in Turkey. Previously the SI Council had underlined the International's solidarity with the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan.

SIMEC, at its meeting in Tunis in May 1996, recommended the continuation of the mandate of the working group. As it has repeatedly affirmed, the SI remains committed to supporting the rights of the Kurdish people to fair treatment, peace and democracy.

SIMEC IN CAIRO

Our Middle East Committee met in Cairo in November 1994, at the invitation of the governing National Democratic Party, which has long played an important role in seeking peace in the region. In the days before this meeting the International had greeted with satisfaction the signature of a treaty between Israel and Jordan. The Committee focused on the situation in the autonomous Palestinian areas, following the return of PLO Chair Yasser Arafat to head the new Palestinian Authority, stressing the importance of early elections and practical assistance to the electoral process.

A basic perspective of our International is that peace and security, in the Middle East as elsewhere, are dependent on political and economic development. The Committee endorsed the sentiments expressed in a statement by our President Pierre Mauroy: *"It is not acceptable that difficulties of an economic order compromise the enormous progress achieved thanks to the determination of the PLO leaders and the Labour government of Israel"*.

NOBEL PEACE PRIZE FOR RABIN, PERES AND ARAFAT

Meeting in Budapest in December 1994, the SI Council hailed the award of the 1994 Nobel Peace Prize to the Israeli Prime Minister, Yitzhak Rabin, and Foreign Minister, Shimon Peres, and to PLO Chair Yasser Arafat, and assured them of its fullest support. At the same time it condemned with anger and horror the massacres of Palestinians in Hebron and of Israelis in Tel Aviv which had overshadowed the continuing peace talks. *"The process of peace must become irreversible"*, our Council declared, *"It is a great hope for everyone concerned, for the entire region and, in fact, for the whole world which is seeing so many new conflicts"*. The Council deplored the fact that despite the favourable developments in the peace process there was a lack of economic progress in the self-governing Palestinian territories: *"It will only be possible to unseat the enemies of the peace process if people can see the positive effects of that process on their everyday lives"*. We went on to stress that although terrorism must be controlled by security forces, economic development and social progress were of great importance in curbing extremism. We called for investment in the territories by private companies, as well as aid from governments and NGOs. Early elections in the Palestinian territories were also essential, the Council said, and these should be supervised by international observers.

SIMEC MEETINGS IN TEL AVIV, GAZA AND AMMAN

The Socialist International achieved a long-term goal in March 1995 when our Middle East Committee held a series of meetings on successive days in Tel Aviv, Gaza City and Amman. The significance of these meetings was reflected in the participation of the region's leading political figures, including Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres, Yasser Arafat and Crown Prince El-Hassan of Jordan. These were opportunities for representatives of SI member parties to see and hear at first hand the latest situation in the peace process which we were following with such close concern. Delegates of some 25 member parties in Europe, the Middle East and Africa attended, together with guests from the PLO and Jordan.

In Tel Aviv, the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister addressed the Committee, as did Yair Tzaban of Mapam, the Minister for Absorption, Mapam Leader Chanan Eres, and Nissim Zvili, the General Secretary of the Israel Labour Party. In Gaza City Chairman Yasser Arafat and Ministers Nabil Shaath and Saeb Erekat of the Palestinian Authority were among the speakers, and in Amman we were addressed by HRH the Crown Prince. All our hosts expressed great satisfaction at the holding of these meetings, acknowledging and reaffirming the long-term role and commitment of the Socialist International in seeking peace. The continuing need for a forum such as our Middle East Committee was confirmed and our three days of discussions underlined more strongly than ever the importance of political and practical support from the whole international community. It was with this in mind that our Committee met again in Brussels a few months later.

THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

We invited to the next SIMEC meeting in Brussels, in July 1995, representatives of the World Bank and the European Commission and asked them to report on their work with the region, in particular with the Palestinian Authority. The delegates of our member parties in several countries also reported on their governments' programmes of bilateral economic assistance. The PLO representatives who are regular guests at our Committee replied to these reports, expressing gratitude for all assistance but appealing for understanding of the Palestinian Authority's inexperience and limited freedom of action. We were pleased to hear that, after many practical problems in the channelling of aid and cooperation during the Authority's first year, things had improved. The Committee also noted the already evident economic benefits, as described by our Jordanian guests, of the recent

treaty between Israel and Jordan.

As our Chairman, Hans-Jürgen Wischniewski, stressed on this occasion, the SI Committee could play a useful role as a pressure group, to monitor the situation, iron out difficulties - both practical and political - and speed up the flow of aid and investment.

"MANY GAINS, BUT A LONG WAY TO GO"

A few days after the SIMEC meeting in Brussels, our Council met in Cape Town, where, although discussions focused mainly on Africa, it also adopted a comprehensive resolution on the Middle East. We called for maximum international economic and political assistance to the Palestinian Authority. We welcomed the meeting which had taken place between Israeli and Syrian Chiefs of Staff and hoped that talks would continue. We called urgently for negotiations between Israel and Lebanon to end the violence on their border which threatened the peace process. We also welcomed the beginning of economic cooperation in the Middle East with the Casablanca Conference and the burgeoning European Union Mediterranean policy. *"But beyond all these achievements we have not yet reached full peace either on the Israeli-Palestinian track, where permanent status negotiations have not yet started, or in the Middle East as a whole, and there is still a long way to go. The Socialist International will continue, as in the past, to work to assist the peace process in the region to achieve full and comprehensive peace"*, the Council concluded.

THE DEATH OF YITZHAK RABIN

On 4 November 1995 the International and its members around the world were stunned by the news that Yitzhak Rabin, Labour Prime Minister of Israel, our Vice-President, had been shot dead in Tel Aviv at the end of a crowded peace rally. It was a dreadful blow to all who knew him and all who work for peace in the Middle East. SI President Pierre Mauroy attended his funeral, along with many world leaders, and afterwards spoke of it thus: *"I felt the emotion of those present. I heard the speeches in Hebrew, Arabic and English. I understood that these different languages carried the same message, which gripped the crowd gathered there and the mourning world, the same hope, beyond our anger and distress, that this death would serve one last time, and even accelerate, the peace process"*. Accordingly, our work in this area continued unabated, and in fullest solidarity with Israel's new Prime Minister, Shimon Peres.

SIMEC AND SI COUNCIL IN BRUSSELS

The SI Council reiterated its support and solidarity, with both the government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority, at its meeting in December 1995 in Brussels, where our Middle East Committee also met. The Council called on governments, parliaments and the United Nations, in the wake of Yitzhak Rabin's murder, to adopt the most effective possible action to combat terrorism from any source, and it called for even greater efforts in pursuit of peace in the Middle East. We urged the speedy and proper implementation of all agreements already made and the need to make an early start on negotiations between Israel and Syria and Lebanon, as well as on the envisaged negotiations on a final peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. We also welcomed the holding of the second Middle East Economic Conference in Amman. We looked forward to the approaching Palestinian elections, which would be very important for the stabilisation of the peace process.

PALESTINIAN ELECTIONS

The elections to the Legislative Council of the Palestinian Authority took place on 20 January 1996 and, in line with a longstanding commitment, the Socialist International despatched a delegation of observers, led by the former Swedish Foreign Minister, Sten Andersson. Their visit was organised in cooperation with the Palestinian Authority. They toured polling stations in many areas of the West Bank and Gaza and in Jerusalem, and held talks with numerous Palestinian representatives and other international observers. They reported that, despite some isolated practical problems, voting was carried out with efficiency and enthusiasm, demonstrating a democratic commitment which was very hopeful for the future of the Palestinian Authority.

MISSION TO SYRIA, LEBANON AND ISRAEL

As a result of discussions at the meeting of SIMEC held in Brussels in December 1995, the Committee's Chair, Hans-Jürgen Wischniewski, and I travelled in March 1996 to Syria, Lebanon and Israel, for a series of high-level meetings in furtherance of the International's support for the peace process. In Damascus we were received by the Foreign Minister, Farouk Al-Shara and the Assistant Secretary General of the Baath Arab Socialist Party of Syria, Abdullah Al-Ahmar. In Beirut we met the President of Lebanon, Elias Hraoui, the Prime Minister, Rafic Hariri, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Farès

Boueiz, as well as Walid Jumblatt, Leader of our member party, the PSP, and a government minister, and other representatives of the party. Our visit concluded with talks in Tel Aviv with the Prime Minister and Labour Party Leader, Shimon Peres, other members of the government and leaders of the Israel Labour Party and Mapam. Everywhere we went, the International's longstanding commitment to peace in the region was welcomed and appreciated. We were able to assure all those we met that that commitment would continue.

SUMMIT FOR PEACE

We arrived in Israel in March in the aftermath of Hamas bomb attacks and this gave added urgency to our mission and our talks. The International condemned these attacks, which caused numerous deaths and injuries, in the strongest terms and welcomed the subsequent summit in support of peace and against terrorism, held at the invitation of the Egyptian government in Sharm-El-Sheikh. The world leaders meeting in Sharm-El-Sheikh demonstrated their commitment to a peace process which cannot be reversed by the terrible deeds of extremists.

SIMEC IN TUNIS

The SI Middle East Committee met most recently at the beginning of May 1996, in Tunis, at the invitation of the governing Constitutional Democratic Assembly, RCD, our member party. We heard reports on the current situation from the Israeli cabinet minister, Yossi Beilin, and from the Lebanese and Palestinian delegations. The opening of final status talks between Israelis and Palestinians was welcomed but deep concern was expressed about the recent escalation of conflict between Hezbollah guerrillas and Israeli forces in Southern Lebanon and the continuing security concerns which were to some extent undermining relations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. Much attention was focused on the general elections in Israel, due to be held at the end of May. The Committee, as our Chair emphasised in his summing up, was vehement in its condemnation of all forms of terrorism, political and religious extremism, whilst stressing that the necessary combatting of terrorism should always seek to spare the lives of uninvolved civilians. It encouraged SI member parties to intensify their contacts with Syria and Lebanon and to urge their governments to fulfil and increase economic aid commitments, especially to Lebanon.

Since our Middle East Committee last met, our member parties in Israel have sustained a narrow defeat in the general elections, and are now in opposition to a government which has yet to prove its commitment to the peace process. When our Mediterranean Committee met in Malta in July it called on the new Israeli government to respect and honour the agreements signed by its predecessors, and on the Arab countries to maintain the dialogue with the Netanyahu government in order to enable the process to continue. It also pointed to the positive influence that Israel's economic partners, and especially the European Union, could have on the new government.

In the coming period, the Socialist International, through its many close contacts in the region, will do all in its power to ensure that the Middle East continues on the path towards peace so courageously opened up by our members and friends, especially the Israel Labour Party, Mapam and the PLO.

NORTH AMERICA, LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Along with our two member parties in the United States, in 1992 the International greeted the election of the Democratic candidate, Bill Clinton, as US President with expressions of hope and encouragement. Since then, the International, through its working groups and others, has had the opportunity for very positive discussions on matters of mutual concern with officials of the State Department and other US officials. Our continuing productive relationship with the National Democratic Institute and other friends in the US Democratic Party, whose representatives have attended some of our meetings, is also important. Along with several other guests from SI member parties, I was in Chicago for the very recent Democratic Party Convention. The International will be following the presidential election campaign with great interest and expectation. In all our contacts in the United States we continue to cooperate closely with the SI members there, the Democratic Socialists of America and Social Democrats USA. Our longstanding contacts with the AFL-CIO, now under the leadership of John Sweeney, have also continued.

The International has welcomed a number of important policy initiatives undertaken by the Clinton Administration during this period. The United States action in Haiti, in cooperation with the United Nations, led to the restoration of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and put that country back on the road to democracy. Similarly the key role Washington played in achieving the Dayton Accords, followed by the United States efforts in Bosnia, again in

cooperation with the United Nations and European countries, have renewed the chances for achieving peace and democracy in the Balkans. The US Administration has played a key role, too, in the very difficult negotiations in Geneva to ban nuclear weapons tests for all time. It has also worked with determination to achieve an international agreement to ban the use, stockpiling and production of landmines, whilst committing significant resources to help clear devices from Bosnia and other former war zones.

The New Democratic Party meanwhile continues to be a significant political force in Canada and an active participant in the work of the International. The Party is in government in the states of British Columbia and Saskatchewan and is approaching with optimism the national elections due next year.

The presence of social democratic values in political and public life in North America is often underestimated. The opportunity provided by the SI Congress to point out and strengthen links with all those on the North American continent who share our priorities is most welcome.

Meanwhile the main emphasis of the International's activities in Latin America and the Caribbean is on developing the social democratic agenda there, and on the defence and development of democracy. In the 1980s our parties were at the heart of the struggle for democratisation in this part of the world. Almost every country in Latin America and the Caribbean now has a government elected in free multi-party elections.

Whether in government or in opposition, our parties are strongly upholding responsible government and social rights, as well as developing policies which can reduce the gap between rich and poor, and extend political and economic development to the millions who remain marginalised. To this end, the SI Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean (SICLAC) chaired by our Vice-President, José Francisco Peña Gómez, is a well recognised and influential body whose meetings bring together in large numbers representatives of SI member parties and many others in the region.

ELECTIONS IN GUYANA

One of the first official missions of the International after our last Congress in Berlin was to observe the presidential and parliamentary elections held in October 1992 in Guyana. Our observers were invited by the Working People's Alliance an SI member party. They met up with observers from a group organised jointly by the Commonwealth and the US Carter Center, who included further representatives of SI member parties. The observers noted a

high turnout of voters, but many organisational problems, and violence from supporters of the outgoing President, Desmond Hoyte. They considered, however, that the elections, which were won by the People's Progressive Party, led by Cheddi Jagan who was elected President, were an important step towards securing real democracy in Guyana.

PRESIDENT ARISTIDE AT SI COUNCIL IN ATHENS

At the SI Council meeting in Athens in February 1993, we welcomed Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the exiled President of Haiti, as a special guest. When President Aristide was elected in his country's first free and fair elections in 1990 SI observers were present and witnessed with great satisfaction Haiti's joining of the worldwide community of democratic nations. When just nine months later that democratic experience ended in a military coup we condemned it vehemently and affirmed our solidarity with our member parties, PANPRA and KONAKOM, and all the democratic forces in the country. The Council was addressed by President Aristide on the grave situation of his compatriots since the coup and gave its fullest support to all efforts being made both within and outside Haiti for the re-establishment of democracy and the return of the elected President.

In Athens, too, our Council, which focused on the theme of 'Democracy, Peace and Economic Cooperation', considered the situation in Central America and adopted a resolution calling in particular for the consolidation of peace in El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua.

A further Council resolution expressed concern about developments in Cuba, where economic deterioration and the US blockade were causing growing hardship. The SI hopes to see the initiation in Cuba of a peaceful transition to a democratic, multi-party system, our Council stressed. It urged the Cuban government to free political prisoners and begin a dialogue with democratic opposition forces.

ELECTIONS IN PARAGUAY

Continuing our commitment to help guarantee the consolidation of democracy by sending outside observers to elections, the International sent a delegation, headed by myself, to observe the presidential and legislative elections held in Paraguay in May 1993. We went at the invitation of our member party, the Revolutionary Febrerista Party, PRF. The SI observers followed the voting process in several areas of the country and had contacts with the electoral authorities, candidates, voters and other international

observers. Some incidents during the voting period caused concern, but our delegation was able to state its satisfaction with the democratic maturity demonstrated by the Paraguayan people in these elections. This impression was confirmed recently, when the democratic political establishment in Paraguay proved strong enough to repel an attempted coup against the government of President Wasmosy.

GUATEMALA: SETBACK FOR DEMOCRACY

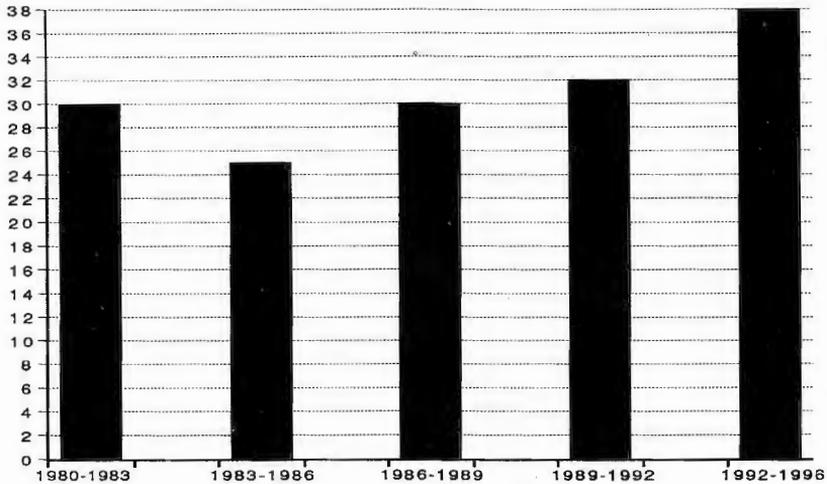
Also in May 1993, the International condemned in the strongest terms the 'auto-coup' carried out by President Jorge Serrano of Guatemala. We called for the immediate re-establishment of the constitutional order, and extended the broadest fraternal solidarity to the democratic forces of Guatemala, including our member party, the PSD. We followed this situation very closely and joined with all Guatemalan democrats in welcoming the successful rejection of the coup d'état and the restoration of the constitutional order under a new president. The democratic process in Guatemala was further consolidated by the presidential and parliamentary elections held at the end of 1995, but violence and human rights violations persist.

SICLAC IN SANTO DOMINGO

The SI Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean, SICLAC, met in Santo Domingo, capital of the Dominican Republic, in August 1993. The gathering took the form of a regional conference, with the participation of 35 member and invited parties. It was hosted by the Dominican Revolutionary Party, PRD. We discussed how to secure and strengthen the democratic process in the region, as well as the many elections due to be held in Latin America in the following months and the policy platforms of democratic socialist parties, and adopted a detailed resolution on these themes.

In a resolution on the situation in Venezuela, following the suspension from office of President Carlos Andrés Pérez, the conference stressed the country's strong democratic tradition and called for the charges against the President to be considered within the due process of law. It welcomed the formation of a new government in Haiti, and condemned the suspension of democracy by President Alberto Fujimori of Peru and the detention of Agustín Mantilla, an officer of the SI's member party, APRA. Other resolutions dealt with the situation in El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua and the trading policy of the European Community towards the banana-producing countries of the Caribbean.

Social democratic guests from Cuba attended our meeting for the first time and the SI Committee welcomed their presence. The Council meeting held in Lisbon later that year endorsed the resolutions adopted by SICLAC.



Number of parties - SI members and guests - from Latin America and the Caribbean participating in SI activities in the last five inter-congress periods

ELECTIONS IN HONDURAS...

Representatives of the M-Lider movement of Honduras, with which the International has longstanding contacts, attended our regional conference in Santo Domingo and requested the sending of observers to the elections due to take place in their country in November 1993. Accordingly an SI delegation went to Honduras to observe the voting. They were able to affirm that the elections were carried out in a satisfactory manner. They considered that the successful holding of these elections had further consolidated democracy and political institutions in Honduras. Carlos Roberto Reina, the candidate of M-Lider and the Liberal Party, was elected president and the Liberals also led the poll in the parliamentary and municipal elections.

...IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC...

The elections of May 1994 in the Dominican Republic presented a different picture. I headed a large delegation of the Socialist International which visited during the election period, at the request of the Dominican Revolutionary Party, whose Leader, José Francisco Peña Gómez, was a presidential

candidate. We attended polling stations in the capital, Santo Domingo, in other cities and in numerous areas of the country. We afterwards had to report that *"there had been serious and grave irregularities which affected the carrying out of truly free, fair and informed elections"*. Thousands, we noted, had been unable to vote because their names did not appear on the electoral registers. Similar reports were later made by other international observers. The Dominican authorities, whilst rejecting the comments of observers, proceeded to a recount of some of the votes, after which the incumbent President, Joaquín Balaguer, who had already claimed victory, was declared re-elected. The Socialist International denounced the inadequate conduct of the elections and in July 1994, prior to President Balaguer's inauguration in August, issued a further statement stressing that new elections should be held as soon as possible. An agreement was subsequently reached between the political parties in the Dominican Republic that the President's term of office would be shortened to two years, with new elections to take place in 1996 after a process of electoral reform.

...AND IN MEXICO

An SI delegation was also in Mexico for the presidential and parliamentary elections held there in August 1994. We visited polling stations in a wide variety of places and observed a calm and orderly voting process, marred by some inadequacies in voting provisions for electors who were away from their constituencies. At the conclusion of voting our delegation noted the high level of participation and underlined that the SI should continue to strengthen its relations with Mexican political forces committed to the welfare, progress and democratic development of the Mexican people - aims which are shared by our International.

DEMOCRACY RESTORED IN HAITI

When the SI Council met in Budapest in December 1994, we gave a warm welcome to the restoration of President Aristide to office, stressing that Haiti would require continued assistance from the international community to help it recover from the disastrous situation of the previous three years. President Aristide invited the SI Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean to meet in Haiti - an invitation we had great pleasure in accepting - and this meeting took place in Port-au-Prince the following January, as a practical demonstration of solidarity with the President and his newly appointed government, which included ministers from PANPRA and KONAKOM.

SICLAC IN PORT-AU-PRINCE

Hosted by our two member parties in Haiti, our meeting in Port-au-Prince was a notable occasion. The SI Committee's inaugural session took place before a large local audience in the capital city and was addressed by the Prime Minister, Smarck Michel, and other members of the government. We later reconvened at the Presidential Palace, where President Aristide addressed us. SI President Pierre Mauroy and Committee Chair José Francisco Peña Gómez, paid tribute to the President and underlined the international community's *"moral obligation to give this country the economic cooperation needed to assist its people, empower its economy and rehabilitate its institutions"*. In its discussions and final declaration, the Committee pledged the International, and urged all SI member parties, to campaign internationally for economic aid and cooperation for Haiti.

Through the subsequent difficult period of beginning political, institutional and economic reconstruction, the International has remained in close touch with friends in Haiti, especially with PANPRA and KONAKOM and also with the Lavalas movement founded by President Aristide. Whilst last year's presidential and parliamentary elections were not without problems, we welcomed the first peaceful transfer of government and remain committed to support for President Préval and the Haitian authorities in stamping out violence and strengthening political stability and the democratic system.

At its meeting in Port-au-Prince, SICLAC also focused on recent elections in the region and on the situation in Central America, noting the important role played by social democratic parties in the consolidation of peace and democracy.

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

As I noted at the beginning of this chapter, during these past few years democratic alternation of governments has, to our great satisfaction, increasingly become the norm in almost all of Latin America and the Caribbean. It has been a period of many elections. In Jamaica, our member party, the People's National Party, returned to power. The coalition which includes the SI's member parties was re-elected in Chile. José María Figueres and the National Liberation Party, our members, won elections in Costa Rica. In Colombia, the Liberal Party retained office. Elections were held in El Salvador, following the successful conclusion of the UN-mediated peace agreements and although the ruling right-wing party was returned to power

the left gained a substantial presence in the national parliament. In Argentina, the Frepaso coalition, including our member party, the Popular Socialist Party, obtained considerable electoral support, while the Radical Civic Union recently had an election victory in Buenos Aires. In Uruguay, our member party, the Party for People's Government, holds the vice-presidency of the Republic. The Democratic Revolutionary Party of Panama is in government following the full restoration of democracy in that country. And our member parties were elected to government in Barbados and in St Kitts and Nevis.

In most countries of the region parties which are now in opposition are able to carry out that role in accordance with internationally accepted democratic norms. There is, however, cause for concern about the conduct of government and political life in Peru, as there has been from time to time in Guatemala, in El Salvador and in Nicaragua, and we are following the situation in these countries very closely.

Most recently, elections were held in May and June of this year in the Dominican Republic and, with the serious irregularities of the last poll very much in mind, these were the focus of particular attention from the Socialist International and its member parties.

THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC: SI MEETING, ELECTIONS

When the SI Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean met in Santo Domingo in March 1996 about 50 SI-member and other parties from the region were represented. A number of the International's European parties also sent delegates and we had many guests from the Dominican Republic. Our hosts, the Dominican Revolutionary Party, were in mid-campaign for the approaching elections. Party Leader José Francisco Peña Gómez was the presidential candidate of the Santo Domingo Accord, which united the PRD and a number of other opposition parties. The SI Committee meeting was an opportunity to reaffirm support for the PRD and for free and fair elections. We also focused, however, on the current situation in many other Latin American countries, and we took as the main theme of our discussions 'A democracy for all - the democratic socialist proposal: participation and equal opportunity'.

Less than two months later, I was privileged to lead a delegation of some 60 representatives of SI member parties which travelled to the Dominican Republic in May to observe the first round of voting in the presidential elections, which were brought forward following the political reforms undertaken after the protests of irregularities in 1994. SI observers visited polling stations in many parts of the country and received a largely positive impression of high voter turnout and orderly procedures. Peña Gómez and

the PRD led the poll in this first round of voting.

In June, an equally large SI group returned to observe the second round of voting. The Santo Domingo Accord and its candidate sustained a narrow defeat, obtaining more than 48 per cent of votes. The SI observers noted and deplored the use by the ruling party and its allies of the state apparatus for electoral advantage, as well as the abusive and racist campaign against Peña Gómez. They commended the PRD's contribution, in its electoral campaign, to democratic development in the Dominican Republic.

At its most recent meeting in Santo Domingo, our Committee issued a declaration which summed up the International's regional perspective. It reaffirmed our commitment to work in Latin America and the Caribbean for improved democratic methods and structures; for political programmes to combat poverty and reduce inequalities; for economic alternatives to neo-liberalism; for high ethical principles in public life; for the role of the state in ensuring justice and regulating economic activity; for the unity and cooperation of the region's nations, and for strategies to promote an active and influential role for Latin America and the Caribbean in today's world.

The Socialist International is today a very active and influential force for solidarity and exchanges between democratic socialist parties in the region who share these priorities.

ECONOMY, DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT

More equitable economic development and international economic cooperation for the benefit of all have long been central goals of the Socialist International. In the preceding chapters I have detailed activities all around the world in which this was a major platform.

The problems of great poverty existing side by side with great wealth never seemed to worry the right-wing ideologues of the 1980s and early 1990s as they planned their free market strategies for the developing countries, and later for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe formerly under communist rule. Wealth was expected to 'trickle down' from the affluent to the needy in an entirely natural way, while social expenditures were slashed and austerity measures applied regardless of the social and political consequences.

In country after country this discourse has proved wrong, as we democratic socialists have always warned it would. The economic extremes of the neo-liberal right have now been thoroughly discredited and it is

increasingly being demonstrated that government, acting on behalf of society as a whole, has a role to play in the protection of the most vulnerable. The international financial institutions, it seems, have finally accepted this and begun to modify their policies, and electorates in many countries have rejected the effects of an unfettered free market as promoted by the right.

But the neo-liberal ideology is still unduly influential in many of the decision-making processes which affect the world economy. Our International, which has always espoused and promoted economic policies of collective responsibility, at both domestic and international level, and has never considered such a perspective to be incompatible with encouragement to the vitality of the market, has a crucial role to play in challenging this state of affairs.

For many years the Socialist International has had a Committee devoted to economic policy. Its Chair was Michael Manley, under whose aegis the Committee published in the 1980s the 'Global Challenge' report on North-South economic relations. When the SI Council met in Athens shortly after our last Congress, we established a new SI Committee on Economic Policy, Development and Environment (SICEDE). In Athens the Council adopted a comprehensive resolution on Furthering Regional and Global Economic Cooperation, which focused on a strategy for growth and employment, support for the reforms in Central and Eastern Europe, reviving the North-South dialogue, encouraging policies to protect the environment and promote sustainable development, and reforming and strengthening the international institutions. These were among the priorities entrusted to the new SI Committee. After the sad death of John Smith, who was elected Chair of SICEDE in 1993, the Committee is now chaired by SI Vice-President António Guterres, Prime Minister of Portugal.

FIRST MEETING OF SICEDE

In July 1993 SICEDE met for the first time, in London. Member parties in every continent were represented at this opening session of the new SI Committee. Our discussions emphasised the failure of the economic dogmas of both the ultra-liberal right and the authoritarian left, the escalating levels of unemployment in rich as well as poor countries, and lack of decisive action by the international fora and institutions. Delegates from Central and Eastern Europe evoked the hardship resulting from the overenthusiastic and doctrinaire application of privatisation policies. The continuing debt problem, the need for increased access to international finance for sustainable development, and the harsh social effects of IMF-imposed adjustment policies

were stressed by many Latin American and African participants. The need for an environmental dimension in all economic policy was the subject of a keynote intervention from the Committee's Vice-Chair, Birgitta Dahl of the Swedish Social Democratic Party. John Smith summed up the guiding sentiment: *"as democratic socialists, whatever dimension of economic policy we are considering, or in whichever region of the world we are looking... we should try to keep people at the centre of our thought"*.

COUNCIL MEETING ON THE WORLD ECONOMY

Not long after the meeting in London, the Chair of SICEDE introduced a discussion of these issues by the SI Council, which, when it met in Lisbon in October 1993, took The World Economy as its main theme. *"The Socialist International believes that growth, full employment and sustainable development are the key economic priorities of the 1990s"*, the Council stated, noting with deep concern the general weakness of the world economy, the low growth and fast-increasing unemployment in OECD countries and the damaging effects of financial deregulation. With negotiations still underway in the GATT Uruguay Round, the SI Council, stressing that *"support for an open trading system depends on an equal commitment to fair trade"*, was already calling for a social clause. We deplored the situation of the poorest nations' economies, due to weak commodity prices, inadequate aid flows and continuing debt problems: *"In addition to bilateral debt relief, the major donor nations should accept that the multilateral debts of the poorest African countries to the World Bank and other UN agencies are similarly reduced and written off"*, and called also for more generous international support for economic reform in Central and Eastern Europe. We affirmed the SI's belief that *"the international community must integrate environmental concerns into all aspects of economic policy. The commitments undertaken by all governments represented at the Rio Earth Summit must be carried through"*, and *"fiscal systems must be used to encourage investment in environmentally friendly technology and used to penalise polluters."*

REFORM OF THE BRETTON WOODS INSTITUTIONS

Heading the agenda when SICEDE next met, at the *Palais des Nations* in Geneva in February 1994, was the reform of the international financial system. Our meeting took the form of a seminar with panel discussions on three topics: The Bretton Woods system - prospects for reform; the IMF and the World Bank - an agenda for change; and Globalisation of financial markets - the new challenge of regulation and reform. Taking part in the panels were

representatives of the World Bank and the IMF, a number of UN regional economic commissions, the UN Commission on Trade and Development, UNCTAD, and the Commission on Global Governance. We were also joined by guests from the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions and the International Labour Organisation. In order to serve better the economic priorities defined by our International, the financial institutions must be more efficient, more transparent and more democratic, the Committee concluded. This could be achieved by bringing them more closely under the umbrella of the United Nations, where decision-making is based on equal votes for all nations.

REGIONAL PRIORITIES

Convening for the first time in Asia, the SI Council, at its meeting in Tokyo in May 1994, recalled that all too often there had been a tendency to attribute Asia's economic dynamism to a comparative lack of concern with democratic and social rights. This had always been an over-simplistic connection, our Council noted, and these days an increasing number of Asian governments (with some notable exceptions) tended rather to share the SI's core belief that democracy is an essential dimension of economic development. The Council, led by its Asian members, called for cooperation in tackling the extreme social and economic inequalities in many Asian countries and in protecting the environment, and for more advanced countries to assist sustainable development in poorer nations. Increasing regional cooperation through the Asia and Pacific Economic Cooperation Conference (APEC) and the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) was welcomed.

In December 1994, when our Council met in Budapest, the development of an efficient economy in Central and Eastern Europe was linked closely in our discussions with the deepening of democracy and the promotion of social justice. *"Balanced development cannot be achieved if efficiency and competitiveness are seen as opposed to solidarity and fundamental social rights"*, the Council affirmed. We underlined, as always, that the market in itself cannot resolve problems and conflicts. On the contrary, a social market economy requires the state to play a role in balancing modernity and solidarity, efficiency and equity. We also stressed the role of international aid, as a catalyst for both the resources of the state and private investment.

The SI Council, when it met in Cape Town in 1995, set out the necessary conditions for economic and social development in Africa: economic growth, trade within an open world economy, debt reduction, strenuous and effective efforts to combat poverty, the strengthening of the agricultural sector, a more

sustainable environment, compatibility of structural development programmes with development policies, investment in human resources, and - crucially - international cooperation.

In Latin America too, as I have stressed in a previous chapter, the Socialist International is a strong advocate of, on the one hand, international measures to reduce the burden of debt, and on the other hand, the prioritisation at the national level of policies to combat poverty and marginalisation. In the Latin American context, as indeed in all our deliberations over the past few years, we have stressed the potential benefits of economic integration, at regional and global levels, as long as this has an element of political regulation in order to take account of diverse national and regional realities and the need to improve social and environmental conditions.

Looking to the European Union as currently the most advanced experiment in regional integration, when the SI Council met in Brussels at the end of last year we took today's increasing global interdependence as the theme of our discussions and called on the European Union, where SI member parties are the leading political force, to use its strength and cohesion to promote the construction of a more just world economic order.

THE SI VIEW

In April 1996, the SI Committee on Economic Policy, Development and the Environment met in Sintra, near Lisbon, at the invitation of its new Chair, the Portuguese Prime Minister, António Guterres. He presented the Committee with a paper highlighting the economic policy priorities shared by democratic socialists everywhere: development, raising living standards and combatting unemployment. The ensuing discussions focused in particular on socialist strategies for employment, on regional cooperation in the global economy, on the social dimension to GATT, on development assistance, environmental policies and reform of the international financial institutions. Leading personalities from many SI member parties took part in this meeting. Along with the Prime Minister, we were addressed by Portugal's Ministers for Employment, the Economy, and the Environment, and the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation.

The Committee reconvened on two occasions in the following months to pursue its discussions. Shared priorities and policy directions, and above all the theme of collective responsibility, emerged clearly from these exchanges, and are the basis of the paper on economic policy being prepared by the Committee for the forthcoming SI Congress, whose main theme is 'The World Economy: A Common Responsibility'. There is no issue more important than

the economic globalisation which is changing all our lives. The International brings together the expertise and experience of political leaders and economic experts in every region. No doubt after our Congress this work will continue to be a priority.

HUMAN RIGHTS

On Human Rights Day, 10 December 1992, the Socialist International issued a statement: *"More and more people the world over are demanding basic human rights and fundamental freedoms. These can no longer be the privilege of a small group of highly developed societies. Violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms persist in many parts of the world. But the collapse of communism and the fall of dictatorships and tyrannies have greatly increased the chances of establishing a worldwide system for the protection and promotion of human rights"*.

Since its foundation ten years ago the SI Committee on Human Rights (SICOHR) chaired by Peter Jankowitsch of the Social Democratic Party of Austria has brought together experts from our member parties to develop policy approaches in the field of human rights, as well as focusing from time to time on urgent issues.

Sadly, there are quite a number of countries where the human rights situation has been a particular cause for concern in the past four years, and the International, also through its Council and regional committees, has been very active in highlighting these and exerting every possible influence for change. I have touched on many of these cases in the preceding chapters. We have been urgently concerned with events in Haiti, Burma, Rwanda and Burundi, Nigeria, as well as several other African countries, in the Kurdish areas, in Azerbaijan and some other republics of the former Soviet union, from time to time in El Salvador - although the situation there is much improved, and in Guatemala, and most recently in Albania. These sorry situations exist in every continent.

The International stands ready to act in defence of human rights wherever and whenever necessary, and brings considerable weight to its actions. But an organisation such as ours also has the wider task of promoting effective national and international systems to secure and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms throughout the world.

THE WORLD CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS

For much of 1993, our attention was focused on the United Nations World Conference on Human Rights held in Vienna in June of that year. The Chair of our Human Rights Committee and I attended preparatory meetings for the Conference and reported back to the SI Committee at its meeting in Vienna in May 1993. The members concurred on the importance of SI participation in this event and the need to bring the SI's highly developed approach to human rights questions to the widest possible audience. We sent a delegation to the World Conference. A memorandum based on the platforms on human rights adopted by recent SI Congresses was prepared by our Committee and circulated at the Conference. It emphasised the status and human rights of women, the rights of children and the rights of minorities, as well as economic and social issues (the right to development), and democracy (the right to participate), and the need to strengthen the UN machinery to include not only standard-setting but the implementation of agreed norms.

Also in Vienna during the UN Conference we organised a Round Table together with the Liberal and Christian Democrat Internationals. It was hosted by Heinz Fischer, the President of the Austrian Parliament, and attended by the Secretary General of the World Conference, Ibrahima Fall. The three political Internationals afterwards issued a joint statement to the Conference. As international organisations of democratic political parties, albeit of differing ideological orientation, we stressed our common commitment to human rights and fundamental freedoms and to the democratic process as the guarantor of such rights and freedoms.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS

The acceptance of women's rights as human rights headed the agenda of the Human Rights Committee when it next met, in Paris in February 1994. The Committee drew attention to the many specific violations of women's rights, and the need to ensure women's right to education, to decide about their own fertility, to protection from sexual mutilation, rape and other violence, and from exploitation in prostitution and pornography, to own property and take up employment on an equal basis with men, and to the need to ensure women's full participation in political life and government as the best protection against such violations. A resolution on these issues was adopted by the Committee and endorsed by the SI Council at its next meeting in Tokyo. Our resolution also called on the UN Commission on Human Rights to appoint a special rapporteur on violence against women, as recommended

by the World Conference on Human Rights. This appointment was subsequently made.

FOLLOW-UP TO THE WORLD CONFERENCE

At its Paris meeting, the Human Rights Committee also reviewed the status of follow-up measures to the World Conference, giving a particular welcome to the appointment of the new UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, as a direct result of the Conference and the wishes expressed by, among others, the Socialist International.

When the Committee next met, in Geneva in November 1994, we welcomed the High Commissioner, José Ayala Lasso, as a special guest. He described his work, with particular emphasis on the situation in Rwanda and Burundi, and expressed appreciation of the priority given by our International to human rights questions and his hope for the fullest dialogue and cooperation - a sentiment strongly endorsed by the SI Committee.

RACISM, INTOLERANCE AND XENOPHOBIA

Also at the Committee meeting in Geneva, we discussed 'A socialist strategy against racism intolerance and xenophobia'. We focused on some well-known contributory causes of these trends in modern society: unemployment, poverty, the weakening of democratic institutions and the loss of the traditional (cold war) enemy, leading to the scapegoating of foreigners and other distinct groups. At the Committee's instigation, the SI Council, at its next meeting in Budapest in December 1994, adopted a resolution which highlighted the continuing gross violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms in many parts of the world and the need for the protection and promotion of human rights to become part of strategies to prevent and resolve conflict. It also underlined the need to strengthen international legal instruments for the defence of human rights, and for a firm strategy to combat racism, xenophobia and intolerance all over the world.

CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY

Continuing our cooperation with the other political Internationals in the field of human rights, the Socialist International, together with the Liberal International and the International Democrat Union, took part in April 1995 in a Conference held in Ottawa on 'Human Rights and Democracy: An International Agenda'. Our host was the International Centre for Human

Rights and Democracy, of Canada, whose President is a former SI Vice-President, Ed Broadbent. Canadian political parties, and Canadian and international non-governmental organisations were also represented. The 12-strong SI delegation included Peter Jankowitsch and myself as well as men and women from SI parties in every continent with special expertise on human rights issues. The main topics of the Conference were the promotion of human rights in democratic and non-democratic countries, free and fair elections, the role of the UN, and the link between democracy, human rights and development. The three political Internationals adopted a joint statement affirming our shared commitment to democracy, the universal and indivisible nature of human rights, and the vital link between democracy, development and rights.

ABOLITION OF THE DEATH PENALTY

The SI Human Rights Committee took as its theme 'Eliminating the death penalty - an unfinished agenda' when we met in December 1995 in Brussels, on the eve of the SI Council meeting. The Council adopted a resolution, put forward by our Committee, which confirmed "*the right to life as the most elementary human right of which no one must be deprived*". We called on all states which had not done so to take steps to abolish the death penalty and to ratify the regional and international agreements providing for abolition, and urged the United Nations and human rights bodies to complete their work on international instruments aimed at a universal abolition of the death penalty. The urgency of such measures was highlighted by the execution in Nigeria shortly before our meetings of Ken Saro-Wiwa and other minority rights activists.

A HUMAN RIGHTS AGENDA FOR THE 21st CENTURY

Drawing on all its deliberations over the last few years, the SI Committee also began at its Brussels meeting consideration of a 'Human Rights Agenda for the 21st Century', to be prepared for adoption by the SI Congress.

This Agenda will focus on the promotion of vital national and international legal instruments to secure and defend human rights. It will also, necessarily, encompass every area of political policy-making. Our belief in universal human rights is the cornerstone of the Socialist International's commitment to peace, equality, democracy, and development. It is at the heart of all our activities, and will remain so.

PEACE, SECURITY AND DISARMAMENT

Our work for peace has changed, but not diminished, in the post-cold-war years. *"The end of the cold war has promised to facilitate the building of a stable, just and secure world order in accordance with the principles of the UN Charter and international law"*, we stated in the resolution of the last SI Congress in 1992, *"But while this is a time of promise and opportunities, it is also a time of instability and insecurity. Economic decline, social tension, aggressive nationalism, intolerance, xenophobia and ethnic conflicts threaten stability and peace"*. This assessment has proved accurate.

COUNCIL FOCUS ON REGIONAL CONFLICTS

When our Council met in Athens in February 1993, with the theme of 'Peace, Democracy and Economic Cooperation', we gave urgent consideration to a number of regional conflicts. Thorvald Stoltenberg reported to the Council on the former Yugoslavia, Hans-Jürgen Wischniewski, Chair of our Middle East Committee, reported on the peace process there, and SI Vice-President António Guterres made a report on the visit of an SI delegation to Somalia in the wake of the civil war and international action. We also examined the consolidation of peace and democracy in Central America and focused on Algeria, Angola, and Mozambique. The opportunities for conciliation and dialogue and the role of the international community in conflict resolution were emphasised.

In the light of this emphasis, and of changing international realities, our Council decided in Athens to change the name and mandate of what was previously the SI Disarmament Advisory Council (SIDAC). This longstanding and important body of the International would now focus on issues of conflict resolution and regional security as well as on global disarmament, and would be known, accordingly, as the SI Peace, Security and Disarmament Council (SIPSAD).

FIRST MEETING OF SIPSAD

Under the continuing chairmanship of Kalevi Sorsa of the Finnish Social Democratic Party, SIPSAD met for the first time in London in April 1993, with 14 SI member parties and organisations represented. We discussed arms transfers, chemical weapons, humanitarian intervention, and nuclear non-proliferation. We had before us several background papers on these issues, which would all be central concerns in the ensuing period.

We also considered a number of urgent topical questions. We were meeting shortly before the UN-supervised elections in Cambodia and a statement was issued appealing to all parties there to respect and implement the peace agreement. We sent a message to President Clinton welcoming his support for nuclear disarmament and urging him to prolong the US moratorium on nuclear testing. We also sent messages to the governments of the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, expressing deep concern at the latter's decision to withdraw from the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and to the government of Ukraine, noting with concern the stockpiles of nuclear weapons in that country and stressing the International's readiness for any helpful exchanges with the government and parliament of that country on denuclearisation and other issues of international peace and security.

It was decided to establish a working group of SIPSAD members on reform of the United Nations in matters relating to peace and security, to be chaired by Lasse Budtz of the Social Democratic Party of Denmark.

WORKING GROUP ON UN REFORM

The Socialist International and its member parties have a strong commitment to the role of the United Nations in securing peace, through international action and mediation and also by furthering the democratic, economic and social development which is the prerequisite for lasting peace. The working group set up by SIPSAD to consider reform of the UN in this crucial area met in Geneva in September and in London in October 1993, and in January 1994 I accompanied the group to New York and Washington, where we had meetings with UN officials and with national ambassadors representing the various regional groups at the UN. We also met representatives of political parties and non-governmental organisations concerned with peace, security and international relations. After these wideranging talks with those closely involved in the UN's work for peace and security, together with detailed discussions and study of documentary sources, the group reported to SIPSAD and to the SI Council at its next meeting in Tokyo.

SIPSAD IN HELSINKI

At the invitation of our Chair and of the Finnish Social Democratic Party, SIPSAD met in Helsinki in March 1994. The Leader of our Finnish member party, Paavo Lipponen, who has since become Prime Minister, took part in this meeting, as did several prominent guests from the Finnish Ministry for

Foreign Affairs. In addition to the report from our working group on UN reform, the main items on the agenda were the prospects for a nuclear non-proliferation regime and security in Northern and Eastern Europe. The indefinite extension of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty after 1995 was a priority. The maintenance of security in Northern and Eastern Europe required both new structures and new definitions of security, it was agreed. The complete withdrawal of Russian troops and military hardware from the Baltic Republics would be an important factor, and Nordic countries' entry into the European Union was welcomed as a stabilising influence.

SIPSAD AND SI COUNCIL IN TOKYO

The SI Council took Peace and Security as one of its main themes when it met in Tokyo in May 1994. SIPSAD met on the eve of the Council meeting to prepare this discussion, which was opened by Kalevi Sorsa. We focused on security questions affecting Asia and the Pacific, and also on global issues. The Council welcomed the new environment for Asian regional security, with the end of polarisation between Russia and China, and of conflicts in South-East Asia, but was very concerned about the increase in military expenditure in some countries and the mounting tension in the Korean peninsula. The importance of growing regional cooperation, and the interdependence of security and economic factors were stressed.

Reform of the UN in relation to peace and security was the subject of a further resolution, after a report from the working group on UN reform, presented to the Council by its Chair, Lasse Budtz. (I shall refer to this in more detail in a later chapter on the SI and the United Nations).

Moving to the question of nuclear weapons, the SI Council, while stressing positive developments - the Start I and II agreements, the dismantling of many nuclear weapons and the moves towards a Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty - highlighted the continuing risks of nuclear proliferation. We called for a permanent halt to nuclear testing, the prolongation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty until a more comprehensive agreement could be reached, effective export-control legislation in the new, post-Soviet nuclear states and a UN register of all stocks of nuclear material.

NUCLEAR TESTING

At the SI Council meeting in Cape Town in July 1995, we deplored the decision of the recently elected conservative government in France to resume

nuclear testing at Mururoa Atoll in the South Pacific. There was growing concern in the international community, and notably within the Socialist International, as the date of the proposed tests approached. Throughout the world and in many international fora, social democrats, especially those from the Asia-Pacific region, made protests. SI President Pierre Mauroy, a former Prime Minister of France, condemned President Chirac's decision as "*against the spirit of the times, and in no way justified by security imperatives*". This view was endorsed by the leaders of SI parties in Asia and the Pacific at an extraordinary meeting of the SI Asia-Pacific Committee convened in Sydney in September, just before the series of tests were due to begin. As I pointed out in the section of this report devoted to Asia and the Pacific, although the tests regrettably went ahead, the worldwide wave of protests - the strongest of its kind in the 1990s, in which the SI and its member parties took a leading role - no doubt contributed to their early curtailment.

Meeting in Brussels in December 1995, the SI Council returned to the issue of nuclear testing, calling in the strongest terms for an end to all testing and the rapid conclusion of negotiations for a Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.

NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT, LANDMINES

Also at its meeting in Brussels, our Council considered recent developments towards nuclear disarmament and reaffirmed the International's commitment to "*strengthening international peace and security through general and complete disarmament, under strict and effective international control*". We looked forward to the ratification by Russia and the United States of the 1993 Treaty on the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms. We welcomed the indefinite extension of the NPT Treaty, whilst looking to the nuclear-weapon states to seek systematic and progressive reductions in these weapons, with the ultimate goal of their elimination. The establishment of the Canberra Commission to study practical steps towards complete nuclear disarmament was also welcomed.

SIPSAD held its most recent meeting in Helsinki in June 1996, during negotiations in Geneva on the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. We addressed a letter to all the delegations at the Geneva Conference on Disarmament calling for the rapid conclusion of the CTBT.

We also focused on new forms of cooperation for security, on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, and on control of the arms trade.

Another longstanding concern on which we have been active is the quest for an international ban on landmines. SI Council stated at its meeting in 1995

in Cape Town: *"Landmines are an abhorrent and indiscriminate weapon; they cannot be aimed; they can be triggered by adults, children or animals; they recognise no ceasefire and may go on maiming and killing decades after hostilities cease; those most likely to encounter landmines are the rural poor"*, and called for an international ban on the use, production, stockpiling and sale, transfer or export of anti-personnel mines.

HELPING TO SOLVE NATIONAL AND REGIONAL CONFLICTS

At our most recent Council meeting, in Brussels in December 1995, our agenda encompassed both nuclear disarmament issues and strong support for the peace process in the former Yugoslavia, and this dual approach is characteristic of the International's ongoing work for peace, security and disarmament.

Whilst we constantly follow and intervene in international debates and developments in pursuit of global disarmament, the Socialist International has an equal commitment to furthering dialogue and reconciliation in the many national and regional conflicts. In the earlier chapters of this report I have detailed our work for peace in the Middle East and in the former Yugoslavia, and our commitment to negotiated solutions to the conflicts in Central America, in Angola and Mozambique, in Somalia, in Rwanda and Burundi, and in Northern Ireland.

All these urgent situations were in our minds when SIPSAD met in June in Helsinki to prepare its contribution to the SI Congress. The Congress will adopt a Declaration on Peace, which will focus on conflict resolution and security in every region, as well as on the United Nations and global cooperation for peace, on nuclear, chemical and conventional disarmament, and on control of the arms trade. The SI XX Congress and its Declaration on Peace will set an important agenda for our work in the coming years.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES

The importance of local government, and particularly of urban government, to the development of democratic socialism makes this a topic of central importance for the Socialist International. On the initiative of our President Pierre Mauroy, who is also Mayor of the French city of Lille, this was reflected in a major Conference of the International and the establishment of a new SI Committee on Local Authorities. *"Cities are not just where the great questions of*

our day are debated, they are also where solutions are found. That is why socialists need to take on the challenges of urban life and do so with a will", our President has said. During 1994 a series of meetings was held with a number of elected mayors and their expert advisers. These led to a quite new initiative - the holding of a Socialist International conference of mayors.

SI CONFERENCE: THE URBAN FACE OF SOCIALISM

In January 1995 some 250 mayors and other elected members of municipal governments gathered in Bologna for an SI Conference on 'The Urban Face of Socialism'. It was hosted by the Italian Democratic Party of the Left. The participants came from all continents: most were representatives of SI member parties, while others had been invited as guests. They included the mayors of major cities, such as Rome, Oslo, Lisbon, Kathmandu, Dakar and Maputo, and of smaller towns, in rich countries and poor, serving in widely different circumstances but united in their concern to bring values of community and social justice to municipal life and government.

A particular welcome was given to those leading municipal governments in very difficult circumstances. From Bosnia, we had with us Sead Avdic of the Social Democratic Party of Bosnia, Deputy Mayor of Tuzla, and Hans Koschnik of the Social Democratic Party of Germany, who was then the European Union Administrator in Mostar. Another guest was the Mayor of the newly autonomous Gaza City, Aown Shawa.

The Conference divided into three working groups. The first, on 'Active Citizenship: strengthening local democracy', considered the reality of democracy at city level, the decentralisation of decision-making, grassroots participation and effective use of the media. A second working group, on 'A Better Quality of Life: asserting social development', examined how to make our cities safe, expand employment opportunities and improve education, as well as the issue of immigrant communities and integration. The final area of discussion was 'A Window on the World: promoting international links'. We focused on the role of the city in international relations and the numerous practical initiatives for cooperation and solidarity between towns and cities.

Contributors to the two days of debate spoke of the very rapid urbanisation taking place in almost all countries. They spoke of the common challenges facing local government everywhere, of the perennial lack of resources for local administration, of the need to provide more housing and better vocational training, and to manage institutions and services effectively in the face of poverty, marginalisation and environmental degradation. The city was described as the arena where more direct and relevant forms of

democratic participation could be developed, and where people of different cultures, and beliefs could learn to live together - a precious knowledge which must then be shared between cities, and between countries.

The size and success of this event indicated a great interest in the pooling, within our International, of social democratic approaches to local democracy. The Conference adopted a Declaration setting out the democratic socialist view on the many important issues discussed and proposing that the Socialist International hold similar Conferences every few years, and establish a new SI Committee on Local Authorities.

SI COMMITTEE ON LOCAL AUTHORITIES

A report on the Bologna Conference was presented to the SI Council meeting in Cape Town in July 1995. The Council endorsed the proposal to establish an SI Committee on Local Authorities, and SI Vice-President Philippe Busquin, Leader of the Socialist Party, PS, Belgium, subsequently assumed the Chair.

A well attended meeting of our new Committee took place in June 1996 in Istanbul, where the United Nations Habitat II Conference - the City Summit - was in progress. Habitat II brought together national and local political leaders from all continents to focus on human settlements in today's world, where by the year 2000 the majority will live in towns and cities. This was a major international event motivated by the same concerns which led the Socialist International to hold its own Conference last year and to formalise its activities in this important field.

The SI Committee meeting was hosted by the Republican People's Party, CHP, of Turkey. Most of those attending were mayors and other representatives of SI parties who were taking part, in various capacities, in the UN deliberations. They had the opportunity to exchange views on the progress of the Conference and how best to bring to it the perspectives of the Socialist International. While meeting in Istanbul the SI Committee also discussed the World Assembly of Cities and Local Authorities, which was held immediately before the UN Conference, and focused on priorities for its future work and for the new dimension it would seek to bring to the SI Congress.

The Committee's contribution will be a very welcome one. This growing area of the Socialist International's activity is imbued with the dynamism and immediacy of local democracy, and its closeness to the urgent problems of our societies. It is set to become an important aspect of our activity.

THE SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL AND THE UNITED NATIONS

In New York in October 1995, the largest-ever gathering of world leaders marked the 50th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations. They reaffirmed the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and pledged to give to the twenty-first century a United Nations equipped, financed and structured to serve effectively the peoples in whose name it was established. The Socialist International has always been a strong supporter of the UN and will do all it can to ensure that the pledge made in New York is honoured.

UPGRADED STATUS FOR SI

As the 50th anniversary approached, and in line with the Socialist International's commitment to a strengthened United Nations and to supporting the Organisation in all its work for peace, development and international cooperation, in 1994 I submitted to the UN an application for the upgrading of the SI's consultative status, supported by a comprehensive dossier on our activities in furtherance of the Organisation's aims. Our application was considered by the relevant UN Committee in June 1995 in New York, where I addressed the members on our application. It was approved unanimously. Since 1973, the Socialist International had had Category II Status and this was now upgraded to Category I.

UN CONFERENCES

The International has been represented at various UN meetings and activities, including the recent series of major international conferences which have brought together world leaders to focus on the great issues of our time.

In 1992 we had maximised our participation and impact at the UN Earth Summit in Rio, through extensive preparatory discussions and the holding of a meeting of the SI Environment Committee in that city during the Summit to draw together the many participants from SI member parties and involve them in presenting the International's perspective on environmental issues to the Summit. This approach proved very positive.

THE WORLD CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS

The following year's World Conference on Human Rights became a similar focus of attention, especially, as I have already mentioned, for the SI Human Rights Committee, which met in Vienna in June 1993 during the Conference

and issued a memorandum based on the International's platforms on human rights. The Round Table which we organised in Vienna with the other political internationals was also a very successful event, which was attended by the Secretary General of the Conference, and resulted in a joint statement which was presented to the Conference. This intensive activity reinforced the presence of our delegation, and the input of organisations such as ours proved very influential in shaping the final commitments adopted and the subsequent appointment of a UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND ENVIRONMENT

Later that year, we held another Round Table with the Liberal and Christian Democrat Internationals and the International Democrat Union, with a view to the UN International Conference on Population and Environment, due to be held in 1994. This was organised in cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Their Executive Director, Nafis Sadik - who was also Secretary General of the International Conference - attended, as did her deputy, Hirofumi Ando. We met in the Austrian Parliament, whose President, Heinz Fischer of the Austrian Social Democratic Party, opened the discussions. The SI's delegation included representatives from Europe, Latin America, Africa and Asia. We affirmed the need to act internationally on the dangers of population explosion, mass unemployment and migration, and environmental destruction and our support for the UN as the major instrument of international cooperation. The four Internationals adopted a joint manifesto, which was subsequently submitted to the UN Conference. Cooperation with the UNFPA, whose important role the SI fully recognises, continues.

THE SOCIAL SUMMIT

The World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen in March 1995 was of particular interest to the Socialist International. We invited the Chair of the Summit Preparatory Committee, Juan Somavía, to address the SI Council at its meeting the previous year in Tokyo. The subjects of the Summit, the reduction of poverty, the generation of productive employment and the promotion of social integration, were, as he rightly pointed out, the issues at the heart of politics, the issues on which governments won and lost elections. Also in 1994 we hosted a meeting in London with the Chair of the Preparatory Committee and the Secretaries General of the Liberal and Christian Democrat

Internationals. Later that year, I visited United Nations headquarters in New York, again with my counterparts from the Liberal and Christian Democrat Internationals, for discussions with the UN Secretary-General and other officials, as well as with members of the Social Summit Preparatory Committee, in the framework of the preparations for the Summit.

Our International particularly welcomes and supports the commitment which led the United Nations to organise the Social Summit. As the UN Secretary General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, said, "*the United Nations' role is to be in the forefront of social progress... The Social Summit is both a test and an indication of the commitment of international society to help the most impoverished*". The targets for international cooperation set by the UN Social Summit are important ones, which continue to animate our debates.

THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN

Like the previous United Nations Conferences on Women, the Fourth Conference, organised in Beijing in September 1995, was a major focus of attention for the Socialist International and its members. Countless leaders and activists of our member parties, in government, in opposition and in their many NGO capacities, were present in Beijing, as was a delegation of our fraternal organisation, Socialist International Women. The Conference made further progress in terms of the international commitment to tackle the discrimination, violence, unfairness, deprivation and poverty suffered by women all over the world. It was able to build on the statements of the Human Rights Conference, the Conference on Population and Development and the Social Summit. Much remains to be done to monitor and widen that commitment.

HABITAT II

I have already mentioned the recent UN Conference on Human Settlements, Habitat II, held in June 1996 in Istanbul, and the importance our International attributes to this subject, which has already led to the expansion of our work on local and urban politics. An SI delegation, including the Chair of our new Local Authorities Committee, Philippe Busquin and myself, attended the Conference. Once again, we found that the organisation of a meeting of the relevant SI Committee in parallel to the UN Conference was most useful. It provided a forum for exchange between SI representatives attending the Conference in many different capacities, and an opportunity for our International to make a positive contribution.

WORKING WITH THE UN FOR PEACE AND DEMOCRACY

The Socialist International acknowledges the irreplaceable international role of the UN, and its work in peacekeeping, peacemaking and supporting democratisation has our full backing.

When an SI delegation visited Somalia early in 1993, with the cooperation of the UN and its Special Representative, they saw the considerable commitment and expertise brought by the UN to a difficult and violent situation. Also in 1993, an SI delegation observed the elections in Cambodia, cooperating with the UN Transitional Authority there. Our observers witnessed peaceful and orderly voting - the successful conclusion of a UN-sponsored process for peace and democratisation.

We had the opportunity also to support the UN mission to monitor human rights in Haiti. Our observers at South Africa's first democratic, multi-racial elections in 1994 saw the enormous work of the UN in monitoring the organisation of the poll.

In the former Yugoslavia, as elsewhere, hopes were invested more than ever in the United Nations. We have supported and followed the UN's work very closely. During the visit of our President, Pierre Mauroy, and myself to the former Yugoslavia last year, we saw something of the incredible difficulty of the UN's task.

The Socialist International, conscious that the challenges of ending or forestalling conflict and crises in the post-cold-war world are hugely complex, has made a contribution to the debate on the future of the UN. The International's view is that the United Nations requires increased support and increased resources if it is to fulfil this role successfully.

The SI Council, meeting in Tokyo in 1994, adopted a resolution based on the report of the working group established by our Peace, Security and Disarmament Council to study UN reform. *"Today the concept of security has a completely new meaning and this fact must inevitably influence the work of the UN during the coming decades"*, our Council stated. The concept of security must be broadened to include social, development and environmental aspects, we stressed. We called for greater priority to be given to preventive diplomacy and crisis prevention, in order to resort to force as little as possible. Greater support to member states in implementing UN-imposed economic sanctions was felt to be important. We supported a strengthening of the UN Security Council by increasing the number of permanent members, whilst ensuring the proper representation of developing countries. We advocated a fuller involvement of regional organisations in decision-making, and the devolution of intervention to regional level wherever possible. We called for

greater monitoring of risk situations, to better anticipate the need for preventive measures, and eventual intervention. Member states must stand ready to furnish the UN with the personnel and materials to carry out its mandate, we stated. The UN must work for an international ban on the production of nuclear, chemical, biological and bacteriological weapons. Finally, we underlined the need for member states to comply with their financial obligations to the UN - their voting rights in the Organisation should depend on this.

The SI was in touch with the work of the Commission on Global Governance, chaired by Ingvar Carlsson and Sir Shridath Ramphal, which reported to the United Nations in its 50th anniversary year. We very much welcomed its detailed consideration of the strengthening of international systems of governance.

PEACE, DISARMAMENT, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

We follow with great attention and concern all the international negotiations on disarmament conducted under United Nations auspices. I have outlined our views and priorities on disarmament issues in a preceding chapter. The UN is the only universally accepted forum where such agreements can be reached. Their importance cannot be overestimated.

But for the Socialist International and its member parties, securing peace also depends on furthering democratic, economic and social development - ultimately the only guarantors of peace. The work of the UN and its institutions in these fields is crucial. Thence the considerable attention given by our Committee on Economic Policy, Development and the Environment (SICEDE) to the need for reform of the international financial institutions established almost 50 years ago at Bretton Woods, in order to make them effective instruments for supporting development. Our proposals on this will be included in the Declaration on the world economy to be adopted by the SI Congress.

This year we are holding the XX Congress of the Socialist International at the headquarters of the United Nations in New York. Our choice of venue reflects the wholehearted support of our International for the UN, and our desire to be fully involved in ensuring that the international institutions of peace and cooperation are supported and equipped to fulfil their role in the years to come.

COOPERATION WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS

The Socialist International has three fraternal organisations - Socialist International Women (SIW), the International Union of Socialist Youth (IUSY) and the International Falcon Movement/Socialist Educational International (IFM/SEI) - with which we collaborate closely. .

As it has for some years, SIW is continuing to hold its statutory meetings in conjunction with those of the Socialist International. More women delegates from SI member parties have thus been encouraged and enabled to attend the meetings of our Council, and the priorities and conclusions of SIW meetings have been fed into our own debates. Pursuing an ongoing commitment of the Socialist International, at the SI Council meeting in Budapest in December 1994 we passed a resolution reiterating support for the goals of the Socialist Decade for Women announced by SIW in 1986, namely an increase in the number of women in all decision-making bodies of SI member parties and as candidates in elections. We welcomed the adoption by many of our parties of quota systems for women's representation, but called for the more energetic implementation of these and other measures to increase women's participation. At the SI Council meeting in Brussels last December we endorsed a recommendation from SIW and the SI Finance and Administration Committee that delegations to meetings of the Socialist International should include at least one member of each gender and parties should be asked to ensure that their delegations had a gender balance. We also undertook to work towards a gender balance amongst the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of SI Committees.

Representatives of IUSY and IFM/SEI, like those of SIW, attend our Council meetings and take part in our Committees and delegations. I and others have regularly represented the International at meetings, conferences, summer camps and festivals of both IUSY and IFM, where we are always inspired and encouraged by the commitment of the coming generation of democratic socialists and learn much from their experiences and perspective. In 1993 we organised in Troia, Portugal, in the context of the IUSY summer festival, the first Socialist International Summer University. About 50 young people from all parts of the world, many of whom had also taken part in the IUSY festival, attended a week's programme of panel discussions with experts from SI parties, which focused on democratisation, elections, and the role of international election observers. Our President Pierre Mauroy addressed the participants at the opening session, as did our Vice-President and host in Portugal, António Guterres. This was a successful and much appreciated initiative.

I have described the good working relationship which the International has been able to develop with the Party of European Socialists and the Group of the PES in the European Parliament.

Another associated organisation of the SI is the Labour Sports International (CSIT) with whom we held a joint meeting in London in 1994 to define areas of mutual concern and future cooperation.

A further partner in our work since the last Congress has been the European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity, which was founded in 1993 by a number of SI member parties in Western Europe to provide an informal platform for meetings and cooperation between social democratic parties in Western, Central and Eastern Europe. The Forum has been carrying out much useful work in building contacts with and between social democrats in the former Soviet bloc. The national foundations which are close associates of our member parties in several Western European countries have also sponsored many of these activities. The Socialist International welcomes the role which the Forum, as an informal and independent body, has been able to play in fostering these contacts.

Regular exchanges continue with the trade unions world-wide and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU). Our concerns, for democracy, sexual and racial equality, the safeguarding of the environment, and the struggle for jobs, are often identical. A current priority for both our movements is the issue of economic globalisation and the campaign for a social dimension to world trading agreements.

I have mentioned some of our joint activities with the Liberal International, the Christian Democrat International and the International Democrat Union. The Socialist International highly values these occasions for an exchange of views. As organisations which bring together political parties internationally, we have in common our identification with the democratic process, at a time when democracy is gaining ground in all parts of the world.

A FINAL WORD

Our International is a very vigorous organisation. At our last Congress in Berlin we welcomed 24 new parties into our ranks, making a total of 109 member parties and organisations. Our message also reaches far beyond our own membership. The number of parties, including both members and guests, who have attended our meetings has risen from 118 in the previous inter-Congress period to 154 in the last four years; Participants from Latin America and the Caribbean increased from 32 to 38, those from the Asia-

Pacific region increased from 14 to 17, those from Africa from 33 to 41, and those from Central and Eastern Europe from 12 to 30.

As we approach the XX Congress we can take pride in the fact that, with the establishment at the Council meeting in Athens in 1993 of our new committees on Central and Eastern Europe, Africa, the Asia-Pacific region and the Mediterranean, SI committees are now organised in every part of the world. In addition we have augmented our work on two universal themes with the establishment of a Committee on Local Authorities and the strengthening of our economic work with a new Committee on Economic Policy, Development and the Environment. All this new activity has been carried out at the same time as we have strengthened our already significant presence in Europe and in Latin America and the Caribbean. Our meetings are to be found in session in every part of the world. In the last few years we have gathered for Council meetings in, amongst other countries, Hungary, Japan and South Africa. Our committees were found in session from Ouagadougou to Moscow and Port-au-Prince, and from Gaza City to Kathmandu and Bratislava. In addition, in the period under review 24 fact-finding journeys and missions to monitor elections were organised as the opinion of the International was more and more sought about the health of democracy in many nations.

This activity has been carried out with the strictest regard to budgetary discipline. Our budget in 1993 was £895,000 and that for the current year is £990,000, an increase in monetary terms of less than 11 per cent. Given the changing value of the pound sterling, we can say that in real terms our budget has stayed constant.

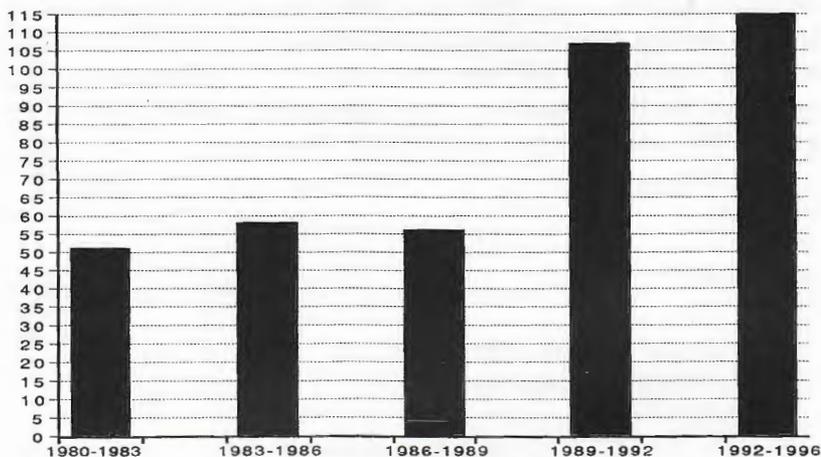
It should be added that in none of these years has our actual income reached the budgeted figure. Unfortunately some member parties failed to meet their obligations to the International and others paid late. Nevertheless we have managed to carry out all our activities, not without difficulty, within the limits of the income actually received. Member parties must give a higher priority than hitherto to the prompt payment of fees in accordance with our Statutes.

We have made a point of getting the political message of the International and news of its manifold activities to the widest possible public. Apart from our journal *Socialist Affairs*, which is a source of political reflection and discussion and gives a full account of the doings of our International, we have produced *Socialist International News* which, in English, French and Spanish editions, keeps member parties up to date with current events. At the beginning of this year we also inaugurated our presence on the World Wide Web, with pages prepared likewise in three languages, and we plan to

steadily expand the amount of information that is available there. Information on our International is being accessed by internet subscribers in increasing numbers around the world.

No less important is the growing flow of documentation from the Secretariat, in our three official languages, on the International's meetings and activities.

The growth of the International is also reflected in many face-to-face contacts with member parties when their representatives visit the SI Secretariat, and at meetings, congresses and other events which I had the privilege of attending. Our missions, and the preparatory work for our Council and Committee meetings which are hosted by member parties are another valuable opportunity to strengthen relations with those parties. Relations are also cemented in numerous daily contacts with leaders and representatives of our parties the world over.



*Major SI activities (Councils, Conferences, Committee meetings, and missions)
in the last five inter-congress periods*

One gratifying result of our increased activity has been the constant and unprecedented number of requests from parties in all regions of the world for membership of our International. They have been arriving in a steady stream at the Secretariat since our XIX Congress. The SI Finance and Administration Committee (SIFAC) which has initial responsibility for considering these, has had before it more than a hundred applications during this period. This important body of our International, which is chaired by Gunnar Stenarv of the Swedish Social Democratic Party, convened in Lisbon in October 1993, in

Tokyo in May 1994, in Budapest in December 1994, in London in April and November 1995, and again in London in June 1996. Taking into account those new parties which have already been recommended for acceptance and those which are to be added to the list to be presented to our XX Congress, it seems certain that the number of new members who will join the International at the New York meeting will exceed in number those who joined in Berlin four years ago. We can take justifiable pride in the testimony this gives of the vitality of our organisation.

The quickening pace of the International's activity, combined with the financial constraints that the secretariat has been working under, has led to a considerably increased workload for the small number of people who staff our London office. They have coped with the growing demands with commitment and flexibility and I must express to them on your behalf profound thanks.

Over the last four years during which I have had the privilege of continuing to serve as its Secretary General, the Socialist International has gone on growing and developing. It has shown adaptability to the world's changing circumstances and maintained the core of its unchanging political aspirations for the betterment of this increasingly interdependent global society. I am confident it will continue to do so.

Luis Ayala
London
August 1996