

SI Council meeting in Santo Domingo 'Working for a more secure and fairer world'

The last meeting of the Council of the Socialist International was held in the Dominican Republic from 26 to 27 November, with a gathering of its Presidium taking place on the evening before. The Council was inaugurated by President of the SI, António Guterres. Under the title 'Working for a more secure and fairer world', it was held amid much local and international interest with various news media sending in staff from abroad to report on it.

Dedicated to the themes of the battles against terrorism and against poverty, the gathering was more cosmopolitan than many held in Santo Domingo, the Republic's capital and city founded by Christopher Columbus himself. It brought together delegates and guests from many parts of the world, from France and Mongolia to

Equatorial Guinea and from Argentina to Finland.

Delegates to the gathering could not fail to notice that the airport at Santo Domingo at which most of them arrived bore the name of the late José Francisco Peña Gómez. Peña, for long president of the SI Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean, was the former PRD leader who in dubious circumstances lost his bids for the presidency of a country which for long had lived under dictatorship. His name was constantly mentioned and his memory evoked during the Council.

Guterres in his opening remarks expressed the SI's solidarity with all victims of terrorism, those of the explosions caused on 11 September in the US and also, for instance, those Spanish policemen who had died at the hands of terrorists more recently. He castigated those

responsible for recent terrorist attacks and the circumstances of the violence: "We must fight poverty with great determination. However we must not simplify matters", he said.

Turning to the Middle East, he declared that an international effort must be made in support of those backing peace in that region and that, while guarantees must be given to Israel, similar guarantees must be given to the Palestinians.

Citing the coordinated international effort against terrorism, Guterres said that it had opened a window of opportunity for a similar effort to mitigate the negative effects of unregulated global markets in the interest of greater justice. He cited Argentina as a victim of the lack of regulation.

A forceful speech of welcome from President Hipólito Mejía - till his election earlier that year a leader of the Dominican Revolutionary Party, the PRD - helped to set the tone of the gathering.

For instance, he paid tribute to the role played by the SI in the consolidation of Dominican democracy and the solidarity and cooperation that continued to be shown towards a country which is waging its own battle against poverty.

"We know that it is not possible to successfully solve many of the country's problems without the participation of the private sector and the social involvement which comes from non-governmental

António Guterres, President of the SI





organisations," he declared.

He went on to make a strong call for an international effort on behalf of Haiti, the Dominican Republic's neighbour to the West, whose economy was deteriorating. He pointed out that the conditions in the neighbouring republic meant an increase in emigrant flows. (Haiti was the subject of a Council resolution.)

Speaking in the name of the host party, its President, Hatuey De Camps, said that the response to terrorism was allied to the question of resolving conflicts.

"Terror groups emerge victorious from economic downturns; they draw profit from a halting of trade, with business bankruptcies, uncertainty and financial chaos. In a word they gain from the throttling of economies, those of the rich industrialised countries as well as the poor developing ones. With few exceptions we all come off badly."

He lauded the four campaign issues promoted by the

International - stopping violence against women; the fight against poverty in Africa; the cancellation of the debt of the poorest countries and the abolition of the death penalty as "concrete forms of global solidarity".

"We must insist that the same energy which is put into the fight against terrorism be put into the fight against its principal causes - poverty, discrimination, drug trafficking and social and economic degradation".

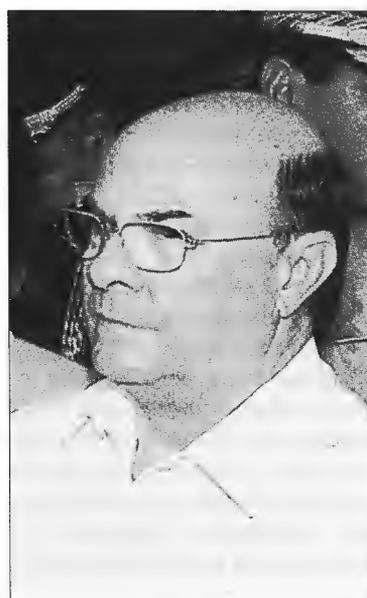
Speaking in the debate on the principal theme of the gathering, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, leader of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party, PSOE, said the meeting would send out a message of trust and security. Supporting Guterres' message, he called for the continuance of the coalition against terrorism into a campaign for better regulation of globalisation.

In his intervention Argentina's former President Raúl Alfonsín, of the Radical Civic Union, said that the SI

should work to define what constituted terrorism in the absence of a definition from the UN, the Organisation of American States and other bodies.

Piero Fassino, the recently elected leader of Italian Democrats of the Left, DS, underlined the need to ensure a democratic government in Afghanistan, "a régime which

From left to right: Luis Ayala, António Guterres, Hatuey De Camps, Raúl Alfonsín at the Presidium meeting



Hipólito Mejía, President of the Dominican Republic

would guarantee the rights of women, the rights of children, the rights of all citizens."

He added that in the context of the fight against terrorism it was necessary to launch an offensive against poverty. He said that more money had to be given to underfunded international institutions to allow them to perform their duties. He called for the International Criminal Court to be given the task of judging those accused of terrorism.

Rolando Araya of the National Liberation Party, PLN, of Costa Rica, pointed out that his country had not had an army for fifty years. He pledged his party to fight terrorism which, he said, was a form of lunacy.

From a Finnish perspective Foreign Minister Erkki Tuomioja, of the Social Democratic Party said that the events of 11 September 2001 could be an opportunity for creating a safer and fairer world in that it demonstrated that many of the world's most pressing problems could not be resolved by force or unilateral action. He went on to welcome the good things that had happened since 11 September such as the climate agreement reached in Marrakesh and the round of trade talks in Doha.

Returning from a visit to Afghan women in Pakistan, Pia Locatelli of the Italian Social Democrats, SDI, said that women could not continue to be held back as in rich countries like Saudi Arabia and Kuwait where they were not allowed the vote. She added, "It was encouraging to see a woman on Telekabal announcing that Kabul had

been freed. It was encouraging to see women putting aside the burqah. But this is not enough. It is the beginning of a process which will take time but it has to start now."

As the Council turned to its second theme, 'Latin America and the Caribbean: deepening democracy and ensuring social justice', the former foreign minister María Emma Mejía, on behalf of the Colombian Liberal Party and its leader Horacio Serpa, said that her party had rejected calls heard since 11 September which sought an end to the peace process in her country.

José Antonio Ocampo, Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, said that in the region the proportion of the population living below the poverty line had increased and that the last 20 years had been two lost decades in terms of the reduction of poverty. He called for increased public expenditure on social programmes. (Ocampo writes on pages 15-18.)

Delivering a message for Prime Minister P.J. Patterson of Jamaica, Maxine Henry-Wilson, General Secretary of the People's National Party, said that greater efforts must be made to develop the assets of the poor and their empowerment to overcome the conditions of poverty.

Peggy Cabral, the widow of Peña, now head of the women's section of the PRD, expressed her sorrow at the tragic 11 September events in the US. She lamented the loss of life and pointed out the negative effects which had even generated problems for

the Dominican Republic. Levels of financial remittances from Dominican workers in the US had fallen as had the numbers of US tourists. This had hit the Dominican economy.

Rubén Giustiniani, Popular Socialist Party of Argentina, said that in Latin America indiscriminate flows of international capital had produced the almost complete privatisation of the economy which resulted in the region at the end of the 20th century becoming one of the most socially unequal on earth.

Rubén Berrios, leader of the Puerto Rican Independence Party and an SI Honorary President, addressed developments in his country following his release from detention for acts of peaceful disobedience on the land occupied by the US Navy in Vieques.

Colette Avital, of the Israel Labour Party, told of the despair in her country as the language of peace had been replaced by the vocabulary of war. "Day after day we bury our dead", she declared. At the same time, she said, the solution of having an Israeli and a Palestinian state is accepted by all. Negotiations had to restart, she concluded.

In his intervention Ilan Halevi, Fatah, offered a definition of terrorism as "politically motivated attacks against civilians". Palestinians, he said, had been the object of state terrorism for years. He called for more international involvement in the problems of the area, particularly from Europe, not least for the protection of Palestinians.

Speaking on behalf of



Democratic Action, AD, of Venezuela, Alfredo Coronil strongly criticised the government of President Hugo Chávez for systematically abusing the constitution which it had itself promoted. The government was increasingly undemocratic, militaristic and authoritarian, he said, and this was greatly reducing the president's popularity.

Tomás Borge, Deputy Secretary General of the Sandinista Front for National Liberation, FSLN, offered thanks to the SI for the support it had given his party during the recent elections. He condemned the terrorist acts which destroyed the Twin Towers in New York but told delegates that his country, too, had been a target for foreign terrorism.

For the Colombian Liberal Party, PLC, Eduardo Verano called for a system of international election monitoring to be set up for his country.

Christoph Zöpel of the

German Social Democratic Party, SPD, Chair of the SI Committee on the Economy, Social Cohesion and the Environment, declared that it would meet soon so as to be able to present a comprehensive report to the next SI Congress. It would, he said, pay special attention to the role in global governance which could be played by social democratic parties.

He called for SI parties to be present at the various conferences due in 2002 concerning global issues.

As the Council came to an end Luis Ayala presented his report on recent activities and pointed to the future strategies of the International. He reminded the Council that the meeting had its roots in the foundation, decades ago, of a Latin America group by a handful of people, the forerunner of SICLAC. He called SI work in Latin America and the Caribbean the second pillar of the International after that in

Europe, and an important part of a movement which was making progress on all continents.

He recounted the success of the International around the world, citing the example of the Balkans. In Belgrade, he said, leaders with social democratic values had entered government after the fall of a dictatorial regime. He told, too, about how eleven governments in Africa contained men and women who embraced the social democratic ideals. In Asia he cited the example of the social democratic input into the politics of East Timor, which was on the verge of independence and whose battle for an end to foreign occupation had been supported by the SI.

Hatuey De Camps closed the meeting with the thought that it had served as a political school for all those Dominicans who had been following the proceedings through the media.

Declarations and resolutions

DECLARATION

WORKING FOR A MORE SECURE AND FAIRER WORLD

The terrorist attacks of 11 September were an assault on the entire democratic world community. The Socialist International strongly condemned those despicable acts against innocent people and expressed its full solidarity with all women and men in grief in the United States and around the world as a result of these crimes. In standing together with the victims and their families and all those affected, we once more reiterated our abhorrence of terrorism.

Two and a half months after 11 September the Socialist International believes that the response of the international community, of the great majority of the countries, irrespective of their culture, has been positive for the future of the world. The worst fears have been overcome. Politics, dialogue and cooperation have triumphed over the worst emotions.

Since the day of the attacks, the International has reaffirmed that no effort should be spared by the international community to bring to justice all those responsible for these atrocities and rid the world of the scourge of terrorism. The building of a broad international coalition to respond decisively against terrorism has been the shared objective of SI member parties throughout the world, in line with the UN Security Council which, following the attacks, reaffirmed the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence and the need to combat by all means, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts.

The lead role of the Security Council in building and strengthening a common front against what is now the principal security concern of the new millennium remains critical. The struggle against terrorism requires a multi-dimensional approach which includes not only military actions but also international initiatives to suppress terrorist financing, to coordinate and share intelligence about perpetrators and their backers, and to bring those suspected of involvement in the

crime of terrorism to justice in accordance with international standards for a fair trial.

Attached to the respect of human rights values, the SI condemns all attempts by dictatorships to use the tragedy of 11 September and the fight against international terrorism to restrict democratic freedoms and rights even more.

Also of great importance are UN-coordinated humanitarian endeavours to provide relief for the war-weary people of Afghanistan, as well as UN political and diplomatic initiatives that can help ensure that their hopes, and the hopes of people in neighbouring countries, for peace, democracy and respect for human rights are realised.

In Afghanistan the establishment of a broad-based government that includes all sectors of Afghan society is vital to the development of democracy and the rebuilding of the country following two decades of war, nearly a half-decade of drought, and severe repression, particularly of the rights of women and children. A new government must give priority to guaranteeing the full participation of women in the political and social life of the country. Crucial to reconstruction and peace is the timely delivery and distribution by the international community of sufficient food aid to sustain the Afghan population through the harsh winter months, and to implement a special programme for the economic and social rebuilding of the country.

Our position is clear. There is no excuse whatsoever to justify the serious terrorist crimes perpetrated on 11 September. These tragic and horrible events underlined that it is not possible to leave to one side crises with roots in particular regions, because political, economic, financial and now, certainly, security threats are clearly global in nature, with one type of crisis often compounding another, as was the case when the terrorist attacks dealt a heavy blow to the world economy, which only makes conditions all the more difficult for the poorest people struggling to improve their lives.

Hopelessness and despair in many regions of the world can create a

fertile ground for extremism and violence. We urge, therefore, that as much effort be put into the fight against poverty and injustice as has been exerted in the fight against terrorism.

The parties of the Socialist International commit themselves to carrying out an agenda for a new world order, which would include the following initiatives:

- Strengthening the role of international institutions because it is increasingly urgent to give to the United Nations and other international organisations such as the WTO, WHO and the ILO, the capability, mandate and resources to enable them to face the challenges of this global era, and also to encourage ratification of the International Criminal Court.
- The holding of an international conference to promote dialogue and rapprochement between the different cultures of the world.
- To work to deepen our social democratic values in every region in the world, confident that they are the best response to today's uncertainties and the best way to fulfil the hopes of people everywhere.

The various aspects of the struggle against terrorism therefore go together with the continuing work of the Socialist International for the resolution of all regional conflicts, especially in the Middle East, and poverty alleviation. This means promoting peace wherever in the world violence has broken out, struggling for human rights wherever they are denied, democracy wherever it is missing, and social justice everywhere, all for a more secure and fairer world.

RESOLUTION ON FIGHTING THE FUNDING OF TERRORISM

Original: Portuguese

Fighting terrorism and the organisations that support it begins primarily by attacking its funding. It is clear that any action to eradicate terrorism will only be effective if it disrupts primarily the means and structures that allow the operation

and existence of those organisations.

Fighting the funding of terrorism means an unceasing combat with all forms of financial crime perpetrated by criminal organisations connected with drugs, arms sales or human trafficking. But it also implies a fight against the flow of legal funds that support terrorism.

The arduousness of this task was made very clear to everyone with the dramatic events of 11 September. Therefore, we need to think and act upon two main imbalances in current financial markets:

- the role of tax havens and their way of operation;
- the lack of effective international mechanisms for the regulation of capital flows.

Tax havens and offshore centres

When the so-called offshore centres and tax havens were created their main purpose was to contribute to the economic development of peripheral regions and their need to attract new investments. Today that does not correspond to reality.

Many offshore centres have become platforms that work as a hub for money laundering, for the establishment of covert companies for organised crime, and for the funding of terrorism, as we clearly see from the information released by the United States after the events of 11 September.

Recently the International Monetary Fund, IMF, estimated that the global amount of money connected to money laundering in offshore centres corresponds to 2 to 5 per cent of the global GDP.

Today there are 90 offshore centres identified all over the world and in many of them the financial authorities do not carry out adequate inspections. There are offshore centres where the tax benefits are becoming larger and larger without anybody knowing the source of the money.

Therefore the Socialist International supports all measures that could be taken at international and national levels in order to:

- put an end to tax havens that do not allow total financial transparency, namely providing information on the source of the money and the entities involved;
- change the rules of bank secrecy in

the countries that, although not technically considered tax havens, may carry out the same type of functions for the funding of international terrorism.

International financial regulation

It is clear today that the fact that we do not have efficient and global mechanisms to regulate international capital flows is a huge barrier to the fight against the funding of terrorism and terrorism itself. It is not only the problem of money laundering but also the flow of legal funds that support terrorism.

The regulation mechanisms that we have today at a regional level or just at a bilateral level are clearly insufficient to prevent terrorist groups accessing international financial markets.

To create the right tools and policies within a limited geographic area is not enough. We need to create mechanisms to assure global application and coordination.

Therefore it is crucial to ensure the reinforcement of international co-operation in the financial area, with in the United Nations framework. The mechanisms that make possible the regulation of the markets can only be created at this level.

The SI proposed that through international cooperation and within the UN system and the Bretton Woods institutions new mechanisms be established to guarantee the main recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force, namely:

1. the ratification and immediate implementation of the tools already defined by the UN, such as the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism, approved in 1999 and Security Council Resolution 1373;
2. the criminalisation of the financing of terrorism and associated money laundering;
3. the freezing of terrorist organisations' assets;
4. the obligation to track and monitor transfers of funds, identifying the name, address and account number of each operation, and
5. support for the application of law enforcement and support for regulatory bodies in different countries as well the investigation of terrorist activities.

RESOLUTION ON THE MIDDLE EAST

The Socialist International, which includes among its members the Labour Party and Meretz in Israel, and Fatah in Palestine, has for many years been involved in ongoing attempts to reach peace through dialogue in the region.

For more than a year now, the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians has claimed many lives and created great suffering. The parties must get out of this vicious circle by implementing the recommendations of the Mitchell Report. As it seems difficult for the parties themselves to manage such a process, we believe an international monitoring mechanism must be established.

The Socialist International believes that both parties must halt violence and secure a cease-fire. Security cooperation must resume immediately and confidence-building measures must be exchanged. These are all important for the resumption of negotiations.

Israel should withdraw to the positions prior to 28 September 2000. The freezing of settlement activity should be done immediately and the blockade of the Palestinian territories should be lifted. The Palestinian Authority must do everything to get control over armed groups.

Yet, none of these steps will be sustained for long without a return to serious negotiations. It is necessary to move onto final status negotiations. The SI reaffirms its conviction that a just and lasting peace can only be based on respect for international law and UN Security Council resolutions 242 and 338, summarised in the principle of land for peace. This peace must definitely guarantee security and freedom for both parties.

A lasting peace will not be conceived without the establishment of a viable Palestinian state and security for Israel.

The SI will continue to play its part in the efforts to reach a just and lasting peace, in particular through our Permanent Contact Group and the SI Middle East Committee.

DECLARATION ON COLOMBIA

Original: Spanish

The Socialist International expresses its solidarity with the people of Colombia in the search for peace through a negotiated political solution to the armed conflict and recognises the current serious crisis in the peace process.

The Socialist International calls on all sides - the guerrilla groups and the government of President Andrés Pastrana - to look for ways to overcome the disagreements and the difficulties that have stalled any advance of dialogue, to eliminate the activities of the paramilitaries, the guerrillas and other illegal actors, and the evil work of all those involved in drug cultivation, processing and trafficking, and money laundering. The Socialist International reminds all the armed activists - FARC, ELN, AUC - that the search for peace, if it is to enjoy the support of the international community, must in all circumstances involve strict respect for human rights.

The new global reality stemming from terrorism requires great efforts within countries where, as in Colombia, armed conflicts persist, in order that they can be overcome, and to initiate at the same time the transformation of the social conditions from which the conflicts originated.

We urge both the government and the people of Colombia to protect and develop the human rights of all its citizens, to work together to bring an end to all forms of discrimination and to create the conditions through which Colombia can achieve its full economic potential, so that its people can prosper and develop free from violence and terror.

The Socialist International expresses its full support to the government and the people of Colombia, in order to contribute to a coming together of all sides and a strengthening of the peace process. It also calls for the creation of a commission to support and accompany the peace process.

DECLARATION ON WORLD POVERTY

Original: Spanish

The Socialist International actively promotes a reduction of world poverty as an essential goal and guarantee of global solidarity. In this

context, it adopts the aim of the United Nations Millennium Declaration to reduce present rates of poverty by half by 2015.

As part of the strategy to fight poverty, unemployment and social inequalities, the Socialist International supports the broadening of developed countries' programmes for the restructuring of foreign debt and for the cancellation of the debts of the less developed countries and of those nations which are experiencing unmanageable economic situations.

Though globalisation of trade and the increase in capital flows which has taken place worldwide in recent years has been accompanied by unprecedented economic growth, it has deepened the gulf between rich and poor countries. New technologies have brought an increasing concentration of economic and financial power which has exposed countries to extreme vulnerability in the face of financial and economic crises.

Though these technologies have increased productivity and created new forms of work they have not allowed an equitable distribution of profits and at the same time have done away with a large number of jobs. Globalisation has increased the power and influence of multinational corporations, speculators and exchange market manipulators at the expense of national governments.

Today, out of a world population of six billion, almost half have incomes of less than US\$2 a day. The poorest 10 per cent of the world's population receives only 1.6 per cent of the income of richest 10 per cent of that population. The poorest 57 per cent of the world's population hardly receives the income of the richest one per cent.

In recent decades the poorest 5 per cent of the world's population has lost more than a quarter of its purchasing power, while the richest increased its real income by 12 per cent. The national per capita income of the twenty richest countries is 37 times larger than that of the twenty poorest, a gap which has doubled in size over the last forty years.

States are called on to ensure that globalisation works to the interest of the whole world community and not only to the large capital interests of the multinationals. Governments containing Socialist International member parties should undertake to develop worldwide social and

economic policies leading towards the overcoming of the debt, inequality and exclusion which is the lot of millions of the world's poor. That is contained in the Socialist International's undertaking that globalisation will bring benefits to all the planet's inhabitants.

One of the most important measures which must be adopted to help governments everywhere fight poverty is to adapt the structures of a number of multilateral bodies such as the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO, to the demands of the realities of the poorest countries.

The roles of the IMF and the World Bank have become confused because of the practice of making cross-conditionality a requisite for using their credit facilities. Credit programmes must be made more flexible and better suited to social programmes to improve education, health and the fight against poverty.

We support the creation of an Economic Security Council, in the framework of the United Nations, which would seek to co-ordinate international economic policies better and advance the global struggle against poverty. We also declare that it is opportune to be more flexible in structural adjustment policies so that these take into account the industrial development requirements of the poorest countries.

Another measure of great importance is for national governments to adopt socio-economic stabilisation plans using instruments of economic policy which do not deepen social inequalities and poverty. In particular, governments must use instruments which counter retrogressive taxation, the volatility of foreign exchange markets and speculative capital movements and their repercussions on interest rates. They must also strive to ensure that economic stabilisation programmes have the smallest possible effect on high-priority infrastructure projects and in such areas as health, education, nutrition and housing.

Finally, we consider it important that national governments adopt appropriate legislation to ensure that the privatisation of public services such as telecommunications, power, water and transport, be duly regulated so as to ensure that the objective of offering better and more efficient services be scrupulously attained. In practice, it is necessary to prevent the transformation of public monopolies into private oligopolies.

RESOLUTION ON THE WTO MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE IN DOHA

The Socialist International welcomes the successful conclusion of the WTO Ministerial Conference in Doha and the agreement to launch a new global round of multilateral trade negotiations based on a broad and balanced agenda which reflects the interests of all participants.

Doha was a welcome indication of the international community's will and ability to work for better global governance on a multilateral basis. The Socialist International regards the declaration on the TRIPS agreement and Public Health as a particularly timely and important commitment. Important progress was also made on environmental questions. The SI nevertheless regrets the impasse on the question of social rights and hopes that this fundamental question for socialists becomes the object of a thoroughgoing dialogue between the countries of the North and the South. The SI will make its contribution from its Working Group.

The Socialist International is committed to the goal of making the next round into one that can rightly be called the Development Round. The declaration adopted in Doha can make this possible. The real hard work will now commence and it is by no means certain that a successful result will be reached.

It is therefore vital that we in the Socialist International, together and in cooperation with all trade unions, NGOs and others, work towards making the round a successful and important step in our endeavours to achieve better global governance and a more equitable distribution of the potential benefits of trade and globalisation.

The progress made in Doha and at the Marrakesh meeting when the convention on climate change was successfully finalised for ratification, point the way towards similar progress which the Socialist International wants to see achieved at the Conference on Development Finance in Monterrey and on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg next year.

RESOLUTION ON HAITI

Original: French

The Socialist International, at its Council meeting in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, on 26 and 27

November 2001, alarmed by the deteriorating economic, social and political situation in Haiti:

- condemns the violations of the rights of independent journalists, members of civic organisations, political opposition, and members and sympathisers who are prohibited by the Lavalas power from holding meetings;
- supports Haitian social democrats and their allies in their efforts to establish a rule of law;
- laments the absence of democratic commitment on the part of the de facto government. The renewal of international assistance should be conditioned on the existence of a democratic atmosphere and a political accord between the governing authorities and the Democratic Convergence;
- deplores the fact that until now the process of negotiation in Haiti has not resulted in a political accord, despite the mediation of the OAS. Such an accord is necessary to overcome the national crisis stemming from the disputed elections of 2000;
- urges its member parties and like-minded parties to persevere with realistic negotiations with the objective of creating conditions to address urgent problems, such as extreme poverty and deforestation;
- supports the decision of its member parties to form, with other like-minded parties, a broad social democratic movement capable of helping the people of Haiti to realise their democratic aspirations and bring about an economic and social transformation of their daily lives.

RESOLUTION ON VENEZUELA

Original: Spanish

1. The Socialist International, at its Council meeting in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, on 26 and 27 November 2001, condemns the repeated attempts of the Venezuelan government to encroach on democratic institutions, as well as its frequent illegal actions in imposing new laws without the approval of the legislature (National Assembly), making a mockery of democracy and its institutions and establishing a harmful precedent which would appear to be the prelude to installing

an authoritarian regime.

Equally, the International rejects the official persecution of opinions expressed by journalists and media close to the trade union movement, which has led to six complaints from Venezuelan organisations to international bodies, including the International Court of Human Rights, in defence of freedom of expression and against unfounded and repeated attacks on the mass media which are inimical to democracy and contravene the international agreements ratified by the government of that country.

2. The SI declares its vehement opposition to the Venezuelan government's open interference in what should be free trade union activity and the right of workers to organise themselves democratically. It also calls on the National Electoral Council and other competent authorities to respect the wishes expressed by the workers in the local, regional and national elections of trade unions representing various industrial sectors, and in the election of the leadership of the Venezuelan Workers' Confederation.

3. The SI, in view of the dangerous situation for democratic values and institutions in Venezuela and the worrying deterioration of government authority in that country, intends to follow events closely and contribute in all appropriate ways to the maintenance of a pluralistic political climate, respect for human rights and democratic institutions. At the same time, we support the civic struggle maintained by our member party, Acción Democrática, and by Venezuelan civil society in defence of these same values and principles.

RESOLUTION ON PUERTO RICO

Original: Spanish

The Council of the Socialist International warmly welcomes the release from prison of Rubén Berrios Martínez, President of the Puerto Rican Independence Party, PIP, and Honorary President of the Socialist International, following the completion of his four-month sentence in Federal prison for acts of peaceful civil disobedience on the land occupied by the US Navy in Vieques.

The Council underlines the result of the referendum held on 29 July this

year in Vieques and the demands already issued by the Legislative Assembly of Puerto Rico and the Socialist International.

The Council recalls its previous decisions in support of decolonisation and self-determination for Puerto Rico.

DECLARATION ON GUINEA

Original: French

The conditions on which the constitutional referendum on 11 November 2001 was organised by Lansana Conté are part of the political drift Guinea has known for more than ten years. In manipulating the Constitution for personal reasons, General Conté showed he did not attach much importance to the rules of the texts and the institutions of the Republic, in particular the National Assembly. At no moment did he conform to the revision programme for the Constitution as stipulated in article 91 of the 23 December 1990 Constitution.

But above all it is the content itself of the revision of the Constitution, submitted to referendum, that is a source of serious danger for the stability of the country. In removing every limitation clause concerning the number of terms of office (previously two for a five year period), in extending from five to seven years the length of the presidential term of office, and in removing all age limit (previously seventy years old), General Conté is simply implementing a mechanism to perpetuate his power. Failing to write it down formally in the Constitution, he assumes de facto the possibility of establishing a presidency for life.

The chain of irregularities that surrounded the preparation, the holding and the results of the referendum is a reminder of the electoral farce during the presidential and legislative elections in 1993. According to the opinion of all foreign observers, and more particularly in the diplomatic circles, electoral participation hardly exceeded 10 per cent (the united opposition called for a boycott of the ballot), the Interior Secretary did not hesitate in announcing the incredible figure of 87 per cent turn-out, worthy of the votes that used to be current in the former Soviet Union. It goes even further, in what we can call a

masquerade, the 'yes' vote would have won, always according to the Guinean official personalities, scoring 98 per cent! Such a set up could make one smile if it did not bring about an ever more exacerbated political, economic and social polarisation in Guinea. If the international community is not careful and does not react quickly to this type of base act, it will expose the country to very serious events, which will create chaos in the whole region of Western Africa.

Obviously, Lansana Conté cares little about the most elementary rules of democracy. Electoral frauds have combined, since 1992, with a personalisation of power which forgets all principles of balance and separation of powers. The actual President of the National Assembly, although from Conté's party, bore the brunt of a simple will of transparency in the parliamentary work. Through the malfunctioning of the State apparatus (illustrated, amongst other things, in the cumulative exercise of the Prime Minister and President of the Supreme Court posts, that is the highest authority of the judicial institution) the whole management of the country is now chaotic. The nepotism and vote-catching in the civil service compete with corruption, which is raging in all spheres of the economic and administrative life of the country. At the same time, misery is gaining ground and the outcasts resulting from the disorder could be tempted, one day or another, to rise up against the power.

Contrary to what some malcontents might think, Guinea is today in the situation in which Liberia and Sierra Leone were at the eve of the civil war. The accumulation of frustrations of the enormous majority of Guineans, their feeling of being excluded in their own country, the repression they are permanently subjected to (the respect of public liberties only comes under the register of the proclamation in the Constitution) are many elements of fear for the worst for the country.

For international opinion, and the African one in particular, Guinea makes one think of a separate country that only knows pluralism by name and whose citizens are subject to a Head of State who, under the appearance of good nature, erected repression as a system of government (as shows the arbitrary imprisonment of the leader of the opposition, Alpha Condé, for two and a half years) and governs without the least concern for external reactions.

Socialist International Women, Bureau meeting, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, 23-24 November 2001

DECLARATION ON AFGHAN WOMEN

The women and girls of Afghanistan have suffered twenty years of war and the constant violation of human rights. Yet they have not been completely silenced. Women's organisations such as the Revolutionary Association of Afghan Women (RAWA), Humanitarian Aid for the Women and Children of Afghanistan (HAWCA) and others have worked hard and have resisted the Taliban regime. Their courage and tenacity deserve public recognition.

Socialist International Women, which has long denounced the systematic violation of the human rights of Afghan women, now demands of all international organisations and member parties of the Socialist International:

- that women's rights be fully recognised as human rights;
- that Afghan women have their own voice and that they have an important role to play in building the peace and in shaping a democratic Afghanistan. For this to happen the presence of women and their own organisations at the negotiating table must be ensured, as well as in the political institutions which will make up the future Afghanistan;
- that the rights of women be declared as human rights both in the future Constitution and in the legislative body which will organise the country's legal system.

We urge that the international community's plans for humanitarian aid should have as their declared objective to help women first and foremost, thus helping to compensate them for all the oppression and discrimination they have suffered.

No plan for the future of Afghanistan nor any political agreement is acceptable without the full participation of women.

INTRODUCTION

It is a pleasure to present my report to the SI Council in Santo Domingo, the site of our first Council meeting in the Caribbean. This is as it should be, because it was the struggle for democracy in the Dominican Republic led by José Francisco Peña Gómez and the Dominican Revolutionary Party, PRD, which made it possible for us to gather here. Indeed, Peña, our dear friend and comrade, who lived by the words 'Primero la gente!' - The people first! - embodied the work of our International for democracy, human rights and social justice throughout Latin America, the Caribbean and the world.

We were proud, and many of us were here in support, when the PRD won the elections in 2000. And while challenges remain, the government of President Hipólito Mejía continues moving forward, inspired by the hopes of the Dominican people, and providing as well a steady hand after the tragedy that recently befell so many Dominicans returning from New York to their homeland. I would therefore like to thank President Mejía, PRD President Hatuey De Camps and the entire PRD family for hosting our meeting, and to also express the solidarity of our International with all Dominicans in their time of mourning.

We gather, in fact, in a season of grief, for it has been only a few months since 11 September and the horrible events which changed the world. The International immediately condemned the attacks in the United States as 'an assault on the entire world democratic community' and advocated that no effort be spared by the international community 'to bring to justice all those responsible for these atrocities and rid the world of the scourge of terrorism'.

We continue our focus on 11 September in this Council, where the opening theme is 'Working for a more secure and fairer world', a task which includes three principal aspects: 'Responding to terror', 'Resolving conflicts' and 'Relieving poverty'. The Council will also concentrate on Latin America and the Caribbean, addressing the

priorities of 'deepening democracy and ensuring social justice'. Social democracy today has a presence, in government or in opposition, in nearly every country in the region, and the goal now is to strengthen the democratic institutions necessary for further advances.

For the Socialist International, the struggle against terrorism has become part of who we are, and we will be in the forefront in this effort just as we have been in the forefront in the fight for peace, freedom, and social justice. Because the Socialist International embraces people from every region of the world, from different cultures, with different religious beliefs, bringing them all together based on our shared social democratic values and the belief in a common humanity, a common civilisation, the foundation for achieving a better world.

OUR WORK ON GLOBAL ISSUES

The Kyoto Protocol and Related Environmental Issues

The International has continued its work on a number of global issues and some important strides have recently been made, particularly on the issue of the Kyoto Protocol on climate change. When the Bush administration withdrew the United States from the treaty last March, the SI declared this to be unacceptable and vowed to do everything possible to keep Kyoto alive.

Since then, SI member parties, following on the work of the SI Working Group on the Kyoto Protocol and Related Environmental Issues, chaired by Siri Bjerke, the former Norwegian Minister of the Environment, pressed for during the international negotiations in Bonn in July and Marrakesh earlier this month, and in many cases participated directly in, the agreements which preserved the Kyoto treaty. The SI, as agreed at our last Council, will now focus on advancing the ratification process and working toward further progress in combating global warming at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in September 2002, which will mark the 10th anniversary of the Rio Earth Summit.

The SI Campaign for the cancellation of the debt of the poorest countries

The Socialist International also has continued working for the elimination of the debt of the world's poorest nations, one of the four SI Campaigns which also include: Fighting poverty in Africa - Stopping violence against women - Abolishing the death penalty.

On 5 October in Paris the International held a special event, hosted by the French Socialist Party, which underlined the cancellation of the debt as critical to the prospects for development in many parts of the world. Workshops and a round table chaired by François Hollande, the First Secretary of the PS and head of the Campaign, featured participants, including a number of NGO delegates, who represent various perspectives on the removal of the debt burden. The day's discussions concluded with contributions from Pascal Affi N'Guessan, Prime Minister of Côte d'Ivoire, and our President, Prime Minister António Guterres.

The SI Executive, meeting in Paris, then issued a statement which emphasised that resolving the debt of developing countries is a principal test of global solidarity in the new millennium, that cancellation 'must be seen in the clear political perspective of financing development'. The SI Executive also agreed a programme of activities which includes initiatives by our member parties in their own countries, closer SI cooperation with civil society and SI missions to international financial institutions, the UN and the WTO to further advance our proposals for cancelling the debt.

Economy, Social Cohesion and the Environment

Our International's promotion of global solidarity was also at the fore when the SI Committee on the Economy, Social Cohesion and the Environment met in Mexico City on 1-2 October to develop ideas for constructing 'Bridges across the digital divide: the role of education in the 21st century'.

The gathering, hosted by the Party of the Democratic Revolution,

PRD, and the Institutional Revolutionary Party, PRI, and chaired by Committee Chair Christoph Zöpel, considered the various dimensions of the digital divide, both at the international level and within countries, as well as the generational and gender gaps in the use of and access to the new technologies.

As part of the International's continuing work to strengthen the social aspects of the global economy, particularly in terms of education and training, the participants agreed a detailed document which emphasised that 'Human creativity, human knowledge and human intelligence are the key productive forces of the future'. In this respect, it was recommended that greater and more equitable investment be made in the development of human resources, and that states as well as private actors must play active roles in funding programmes and expanding opportunities for technological advancement.

The role of social democratic governments and SI member parties was also underlined, particularly in helping technologically disconnected countries to narrow the divide through greater international cooperation in providing high-quality training, and in urging international institutions such as the UN and the WTO to do more to ensure that the digital revolution benefits all the world's people.

The World Trade Organisation

The SI Working Group on the World Trade Organisation is meeting here in Santo Domingo on the eve of our Council, following its work during the SI Council in Lisbon last June, when the International called for the WTO to be reformed and enhanced so that it can realise its potential for expanding the benefits of globalisation for all.

The gathering here, to be chaired by Foreign Minister Erkki Tuomioja of the Finnish Social Democratic Party, Chair of the Working Group, will address the matter, in a statement to be issued by the Council, following the new round of world trade talks agreed just weeks ago by the WTO's 142 members in Doha, particularly in light of the new global landscape after 11 September.

Local Authorities

Moving forward with our work in dealing with globalisation at the local level, the SI Committee on Local Authorities gathered in Mexico City on 23-24 July to advance the process of developing a Charter for Cities Governed by Socialists. The meeting was hosted by the Party of the Democratic Revolution, PRD, and the Institutional Revolutionary Party, PRI, and was chaired by Hermes Binner of the Popular Socialist Party, PSP, of Argentina, Chair of the Committee and Mayor of Rosario.

Mayors and local authority representatives from Africa, Europe and Latin America, discussed the issues of fiscal autonomy and indicators of the quality of urban life. They agreed a document entitled the Declaration of Mexico, which emphasised the incorporation of the opinions of all citizens, men and women, in the planning, implementation and control of public policies.

This distinctly socialist approach will be incorporated into our Charter for Cities Governed by Socialists, as will be our social democratic position, reiterated in the Declaration of Mexico, that 'Human beings are at the centre of our concerns and we want to measure progress in terms of increased life expectancy, lower infant mortality, access to education, health care, food, housing, and in terms of job creation, greater public safety and environmental protection'.

The work of the Committee on these and other issues contributed to the International's preparation for the III World Conference of Mayors in Athens on 7-9 December, which will bring together mayors, municipal authorities and councillors from SI member parties around the world. The gathering, to be hosted by the Panhellenic Socialist Movement, PASOK, will build on the two previous Conferences held in Bologna in 1995 and Fez in 1998.

The main task of the Conference will be to complete and adopt the Charter for Cities Governed by Socialists, and there also will be discussions on three sub-themes - 'The City as a leading actor and decision-making centre in the 21st century', 'The City as a promoter of

solidarity, inclusion and integration', and 'The City as a force for sustainable development and manager of resources' - which will be discussed in depth in three working groups.

OUR ACTIVITIES AROUND THE WORLD

Central and Eastern Europe

The considerable efforts of the Socialist International on behalf of peace, democracy and respect for human rights in the Balkans are well known. It was therefore very satisfying when the SI Committee for Central and Eastern Europe, SICEE, met in Belgrade on 17-18 September, the first SI meeting ever to be held in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia following the country's peaceful democratic revolution last year.

The meeting was chaired jointly by Piero Fassino of the Democrats of the Left, DS, Italy, and László Kovács of the Hungarian Socialist Party, MSzP, Hungary, Co-Chairs of the Committee, and brought together delegates from numerous SI member parties throughout Europe as well as an array of participants from the FRY including, among many others, Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic.

The gathering focused on the latest developments in the Balkans, the prospects for enlargement of the European Union and other issues currently of concern in Central and Eastern Europe, and issued the Belgrade Declaration, a detailed document which, among other points, welcomed the remarkable progress achieved by the FRY on its road to democracy and urged the international community to aid in the process in every possible way. The declaration concluded by expressing our full solidarity with all parties of social democratic and socialist inspiration in Central and Eastern Europe and reaffirmed the commitment of our International to the spreading of social democratic values throughout the region.

Regarding further activities in the FRY, I am pleased to report that I had the opportunity, as part of our efforts to deepen relations with parties close to us there, to participate in October in the Congress of the Democratic Party, led by Prime Minister Djindjic, and the Congress of the Social

Democracy Party.

Elsewhere in Europe it was also good to see social democracy moving forward, as I was able to participate in a number of our party congresses, including those of PASOK, which was held in Athens on 11-14 October, the Swedish Social Democratic Party, SAP, which took place in Västerås on 5-11 November, and Democrats of the Left, DS, held in Pesaro, Italy on 16-18 November. Our sincere congratulations go to Piero Fassino, who was elected leader of the DS at the Congress in Pesaro.

Congratulations are also in order for the Democratic Left Alliance of Poland, SLD, which came first in an unprecedented landslide in the 23 September elections, which I had the pleasure of observing. Following the vote, SLD leader Leszek Miller became Prime Minister at the head of the new SLD-led government.

Latin America and the Caribbean

The long and extensive work of the Socialist International in the Western hemisphere continued with the meeting of the SI Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean, SICLAC, held in Managua on 20-21 October. The gathering was hosted by the Sandinista Front for National Liberation, FSLN.

Delegates from throughout Latin America, the Caribbean and Europe addressed two principal themes - 'Strengthening democracy and its institutions' and 'Building and ensuring an economy with opportunities and progress for all'. Following extended discussions the Committee issued the Managua Declaration, a document which underlines how SICLAC draws on and contributes to the overall work of our International.

With regard to strengthening democracy, the Committee took as its starting point the work of the SI Committee on Local Authorities to emphasise the importance of strengthening local government in Latin America and the Caribbean through administrative decentralisation. The Declaration also affirmed that fair and sustainable economic development could not be achieved in the region without 'relief from the suffocating problem of external debt'. In this regard, it stood behind the increasing efforts by the International on the debt issue.

The Committee issued a resolution on Haiti, which condemned the increasing violations of the rights of journalists and opposition political activists, and called for continued negotiations to resolve the political crisis in the country. A few months earlier, in August, I went to Haiti and found that, despite the tremendous complexities involved, our member parties - the Party of the National Congress of Democratic Movements, KONOKAM, the Revolutionary Progressive Nationalist Party of Haiti, PANPRA, and the Organisation of the People in Struggle, OPL - and like-minded political groups remained determined to find a peaceful, democratic resolution.

Also agreed was a resolution on Puerto Rico. The Committee welcomed the release from prison of Rubén Berríos Martínez, President of the Puerto Rican Independence Party, PIP, following a four-month sentence for acts of peaceful disobedience, and associated itself with the demands of the people of Vieques, who voted in a referendum on 29 July, by a 70 percent majority, for an end to military exercises on that island.

I had the pleasure, too, of attending a number of events which highlighted the work of SI member parties in the region as they move forward in the new millennium. I was in Panama in August for the Congress of the Democratic Revolutionary Party, PRD, and in November, on the eve of our Council, I attended the Congress of the Institutional Revolutionary Party, PRI, in Mexico City.

On 27 October, I participated in the national meeting of the Liberal Party of Colombia, PLC, in which Horacio Serpa was unanimously nominated as the party's presidential candidate for the elections scheduled for this coming spring. During his acceptance speech, he reiterated the party's commitments to alleviating poverty and unemployment and securing a political solution to the conflict in Colombia, all of which will help inform our discussions here in Santo Domingo.

In the Caribbean, we congratulate the People's Electoral Movement, MEP, of Aruba, for their election victory on 28 September. MEP leader Nelson Oduber became Prime Minister as our party won a

clear majority in the parliament, the first time a party had gained full control of the island's legislature in more than two decades. The MEP's success followed on the decisive election victory last spring of the Unity Labour Party, ULP, in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and the swearing in of ULP leader Ralph Gonsalves as Prime Minister.

Also on the electoral front, a Socialist International delegation was in Nicaragua to observe the elections on 4 November and to express our support and solidarity with the FSLN following their narrow and particularly difficult loss, an outcome from which the FSLN is already rebounding and which does not change the party's role as an influential social democratic force in the region.

The Mediterranean

The concern of our International for the heightened importance of regional issues and developments after 11 September was evident during the 29-30 October meeting of the SI Mediterranean in Seville, Spain, where the first theme on the agenda was, 'Political, economic and security consequences for the Mediterranean in the new international context'.

The meeting, which was hosted by the Spanish Socialist Worker's Party, PSOE, and chaired by Trinidad Jiménez, counted on the participation of SI member parties from the European, African and Middle Eastern countries which encircle the Mediterranean. Participants also engaged in discussions on 'Socialist Strategies for taking forward the Euro-Mediterranean partnership' and 'Migration in the Mediterranean'.

Following its deliberations, the Committee issued the Seville Declaration which included the delegates' 'strongest condemnation' of the 11 September attacks, and underlined the belief of our International that 'only through dialogue between different cultures, guided by a willingness to understand each other's different sensitivities, and through a firm commitment to democratic principles and sustainable and balanced economic and social development', can the fears and wounds which characterise the current international crisis be overcome.

The Committee also called for the

European Union, together with the Mediterranean countries, to further implement the principles expressed in the Declaration of Barcelona regarding politics, security, economics and finance, as well as on social, cultural and human questions.

The Committee also expressed concern that respect for human rights was still too low a priority in a number of countries of the region, and that the situation had deteriorated particularly in Algeria. But it noted as well that some countries, for example Morocco, were making good efforts to carry forward transitions to democracy, 'a positive step in the consolidation of the Euro-Mediterranean area as an arena for dialogue, exchange and cooperation'.

Africa

I am pleased to report that the International is welcoming to our Council a delegation from Frodebu, one of the most important political parties in Burundi and a key member of the historic power-sharing government between Hutus and Tutsis brokered by our long-standing friend Nelson Mandela. Having Frodebu represented here in Santo Domingo underlines our solidarity with the people of Africa and our increasingly important work, particularly after 11 September, for the peaceful resolution of conflicts everywhere.

We are also now moving forward with plans for an SI mission to the Great Lakes. The International has always recognised that resolving conflicts in Africa is a fundamental condition for progress. It is therefore with a heightened sense of determination that we prepare to support in this even more direct way the peace efforts among and within the Great Lakes nations. The mission will take place in the first months of 2002.

I recently had the opportunity to meet with President Laurent Gbagbo in Côte d'Ivoire, one of eleven countries on the continent in which SI member parties are now in government, either alone or in coalition. Developments in Côte d'Ivoire in particular reflect the progress being made by our parties in the region with regard to democracy and strengthening democratic institutions.

Abidjan will be a future venue for a regional meeting in support of the SI campaign for debt cancellation next year, hosted by the Ivorian

Popular Front, FPI. In this way we will continue to highlight Africa's problems as our own and promote our common global agenda as the way toward solutions. The next opportunity to build further on our work in the region will be the meeting of the SI Africa Committee planned for the first half of next year, when we will bring together social democratic and like-minded parties that are often struggling in difficult situations, and continue making new friends in the region, some of whom are with us here.

Asia and the Pacific

An issue that has long been at the top of our Asia-Pacific agenda is East Timor, where general elections were held at the end of September under the auspices of the United Nations. I had the opportunity to observe the process along with, among others, strong delegations from the Australian Labor Party, ALP, and the New Zealand Labour Party, NZLP. After so many years of Socialist International support for independence based on democracy in East Timor, it was gratifying for all of us to see the exceptionally high turnout in the vote won by our friends in Fretilin, East Timor's principal liberation movement. The International is now continuing its full support as East Timor drafts its first Constitution, the next fundamental step toward nationhood.

In this region the International also has maintained its strong focus on Fiji, where elections held at the end of August were to be a critical step in the re-establishment of democratic rule following the violent overthrow of the democratically elected, multiethnic government of Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry in May 2000. When the Fiji Labour Party, led by Chaudhry, came a close second in the August vote and was excluded by the winning party from government, the International expressed its deep concern at this breach of Fiji's 1997 multiracial Constitution under which parties are entitled to cabinet positions in proportion to the number of seats held in parliament. The Fiji Labour Party has taken the case to the courts in Fiji and the International will continue its full support for our party and its democratic struggle.

Early next year, our Asia-Pacific Committee will convene in Manila,

where our host, the Philippines Democratic Socialist Party, PDSP, led by Norberto Gonzales, is in the government of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo. The Committee will carry forward its work on all the key issues in the region, which include finding ways to overcome the current impasse in the reconciliation effort between South Korea and North Korea.

A LAST WORD

In these difficult days, the Socialist International continues to be defined by its commitment to resolving conflict and ensuring lasting peace. A focus of our discussions here on conflict resolution will therefore be on the situation in the Middle East. Our efforts on behalf of peace in the region are well known, as the International has been involved whenever there have been positive developments.

The International understands that conflicts can be resolved only through dialogue and negotiation. This can be a complicated process, with many ups and downs, as we have witnessed not just in the Middle East but also in Africa and in other regions.

Our International, which includes among its members the Labour Party and Meretz in Israel, and Fatah in Palestine, provides a channel and a forum for greater understanding and confidence, as was evident at our last Council meeting in Lisbon.

Our efforts will continue in the months to come through initiatives involving our Permanent Contact Group and the SI Middle East Committee - the Chair of the Committee, Thorbjorn Jagland, was a member of the Mitchell Commission whose recommendations for getting negotiations back on track we fully support. Conflict resolution will also be a focus of our Committee on Peace, Democracy and Human Rights, which will be meeting next on 24-25 January 2002 at the United Nations Geneva.

As I am sure our Council will reaffirm, the International will continue to promote peace where it does not exist, respect for human rights wherever they are denied, democracy wherever it is missing, and social justice everywhere, all for a more secure and fairer world.

List of Participants

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