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## SI Council Meeting in Turkey

11-12 NOVEMBER 2013



The Council of the Socialist International convened in the city of Istanbul on 11-12 November, hosted by the Republican People's Party, CHP, a member of the SI. Leaders and delegates from parties and organisations from all continents attended the meeting, which had the following main themes on its agenda: "Current crises related to the struggles for democracy, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa, and conflicts threatening peace and security in that part of the world" and "Reaffirming the centre-left vision for the global economy with an emphasis on growth, jobs and equality, and for a new development agenda". A special session was also dedicated to the events earlier this year in Gezi Park.

The meeting opened with a tribute to the memory of former SI President and prime



minister of France Pierre Mauroy who sadly passed away in June. Respects were also paid to the memory of Yasser Arafat, this date being the ninth anniversary of his death. The sympathies and condolences of the Council were extended to the victims of the immense tragedy in the Philippines and to the relatives and colleagues of the two journalists, Ghislaine Dupont and Claude Verlon from Radio France Inter, who were kidnapped and murdered in Mali in a terrorist attack. Tribute was paid to the six people who tragically lost their lives during the Gezi Park protests in Istanbul. The Council stood and observed a minute of silence.

Opening the meeting, the SI Secretary General, Luis Ayala, thanked the CHP for their hospitality and welcomed delegates. He said that Istanbul as the venue of the Council was the right place to address current struggles for democracy, freedoms and rights in neighbouring countries and beyond, and to extend our solidarity with those who courageously were advancing principles and values that we share. At the same time, we will be building on the spirit of Gezi Park which mobilised hundreds of thousands of citizens in Turkey capturing the imagination of the world. A crucial issue in our discussions would be the war in Syria which we wanted to see ended and a negotiated solution leading to a transitional government and to democracy. Democracy is also the objective when we discuss developments in Egypt, Yemen and other countries of the Arab world currently going through decisive days. Peace between the Palestinians and Israelis and a two-state solution remained a crucial priority and we should embark on an active programme to contribute to this goal. Another priority which needed to be addressed, was how to move forward strategies for growth, employment, sustainable development and human solidarity, to confront the harmful effects of austerity policies, growing inequality, disregard for the environment and narrow, self-centered agendas. The International belonged to all of its members and the commitment of so many to its purpose was its strength.

Kemal Kiliçdaroğlu, leader of the host party and an SI Vice-President, warmly welcomed all delegates to the Council, expressing the pleasure and honour that the party felt in hosting this meeting. He underlined the great importance that the CHP attaches to its membership in the Socialist International, the largest progressive, social democratic organisation in the world, and to the CHP's work within the SI defending justice, democracy, freedom, equality and pluralism, against oppression and inequality, not only in Turkey but also in their greater region and in the world. He highlighted three significant problems facing the democratic struggles of the region: extreme groups and reactionary forces; ethnic, religious and sectarian fault-lines which were creating instability; and the possibility that foreign intervention, especially military intervention, might provide legitimacy to oppressive regimes and encourage extremist groups. The SI must back endeavours to solve conflicts through political means. In relation to the global economy, he underlined that millions of people were paying the price for the failures of the market and the greatest threat of our time is the global inequality which fuels extremism. All these economic and political problems, he said, needed social democratic answers. He concluded by quoting Willy Brandt: "Peace is more than the absence of War...it requires equal development and opportunities for all nations". ([Speech in full](#))

The Prime Minister of Belgium, SI Vice-President Elio Di Rupo, underlined the unique nature of the Socialist International as a world-wide forum for pursuing our common objectives, and in particular fighting against injustice and inequality. Those in office must help those in opposition who are struggling for social progress. Our citizens should not have to pay the price of a crisis of which they are the first victims, he said. Europe cannot be reduced to a single market without human values, and neither can the world. The financial crisis was a wake-up call and should not be an opportunity for coming to



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destroy our social security systems that took years to construct following the second world war. Europe's foreign policy cannot be guided only by blind security concerns, otherwise this could lead to accepting coexistence with dictatorships without listening to or supporting the legitimate aspirations for freedom by those living under tyranny. He saluted the efforts of the Socialist International in favour of dialogue and in support of those who today struggle for democracy and a society free from extremism. Wherever there is suffering, he said, we must continue to strive for solutions that are just and humane. Diplomacy must triumph and we must call for the holding of the Geneva II conference. In the Middle East, we must support the peace negotiations underway between Israel and Palestine and unreservedly throw our weight behind the efforts of all those who sincerely seek a two-state solution.

SI President George Papandreou thanked Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu and his party for the warm hospitality extended. As a Greek and a neighbour, he expressed appreciation for the new friendship between the two countries, something that only a few years ago seemed impossible. He recalled the spirit that energised their work for rapprochement, the common commitment to peace and the merging into a common family of values which Europe represented. He highlighted the crisis in Europe today, which was wrongly labelled as financial – it was deeply political, he said, and was a crisis of democratic legitimacy. More solidarity was needed and a pooling of resources to counter mistrust and the retreat into nationalistic and tribal politics. In emphasising that socialism is today more relevant than ever, he expressed the strong commitment of the International to our core values of democracy and human rights, social justice, sustainable green growth and the peaceful resolution of conflicts, all of which face intensifying challenges across the globe. We need to reinvent democracy to create more unity among people, he said, and democratise globalisation to combat the increasing inequality in and between our societies. What was at stake was global peace and the existence of our civilisation. All the topics of our agenda were connected with democracy, not only in countries affected by recent uprisings, but also in mature democracies where there was a need for a more transparent and representative system. To succeed we must stand united, he said, and succeed we must. ([Speech in full](#))

The first part of the morning was dedicated to a special session on the events in Gezi Park which began in May this year in protest against the proposed demolition of the Park, introduced by Umut Oran, a vice-president of the CHP. Following the showing of a moving [video](#), special contributions were made to the Council by representatives of different organisations and movements involved with those events, including Amnesty International, the Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey, the Revolutionary Muslim Movement, and the Chamber of Architects, as well as by artists and activists. The eyewitness accounts painted a powerful and vibrant picture of what happened in Taksim Square and the fight for democratic rights and freedoms in Turkey. A [declaration on the protests in Gezi Park](#) was adopted at the close of the meeting.

Under the **first main theme**, the particular attention that the SI has paid to developments in Syria and the need for an end to violence and for a political solution to the conflict provided the background to the discussions on the current situation in that country. Ahmad al-Jarba, President of the Syrian National Coalition of Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, who had been specially invited to address the Council, informed delegates of the decision of the organisation, taken the same day, to agree to join the Geneva II conference. This decisive step to open the way for peace negotiations was widely welcomed by delegates, many of whom underlined the important role to be played by the international community if a resolution to the conflict in Syria was to be found. ([List of speakers](#))



Contributions to the debate on Syria were added by the official delegate of the League of Arab States at the meeting, Mohamed El Fatah Naciri, who presented the view of that key multilateral governmental organisation, and by Wael Abou Faour who gave valuable insights to the discussions from his perspective as a government minister from the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP), the SI member party in Lebanon, a country which has been profoundly affected by the conflict and refugee crisis.

On developments in the Arab world, the new first secretary of the USFP, Morocco, Driss Lachguar addressed the Council, and the representatives from the SI member parties in Egypt and Yemen referred to the latest situation in those countries and the ongoing battles by the people for rights, freedoms and democracy.

A [resolution on Syria](#) was adopted, outlining the Council's commitment to an end to the fighting and for a political solution as the only way to lasting peace in Syria. The end of the civil war and the installation of a transitional government should be the two pillars upon which the Geneva II process should build. The Council equally adopted declarations on [Egypt](#) and [Yemen](#), which summarised views of the International and the issues raised in the debate.

In the discussions on peace and security, the prospects for Middle East peace and the role of the SI in this process was a focus of attention. Contributions were made by delegates from Meretz, Israel and Fatah and PNI, Palestine. With the backing of its member parties in Israel and Palestine, the Council designated 2014 as the Year for Middle East Peace, and in the [declaration on Peace in the Middle East](#), agreed a programme of action to be carried out through the year to advance the cause of peace and the two-state solution.

On the subject of **democracy**, the Council also heard contributions from representatives from the Sahel region of Africa and other countries in that continent where democratic process were blocked. ([List of speakers](#)) Among these was the particularly worrying situation in Mauritania where opposition parties, including the SI-member RFD, are boycotting the forthcoming elections due to an absence of a genuine democratic framework. The Council received a report from the SI member party in Equatorial Guinea, the CPDS, on the challenges for democracy in that country, and was also informed of advances made in Guinea where, under the leadership of President Alpha Condé of the SI member RPG, the first democratic legislative elections were recently held. Recognising the paramount importance of the issue of democracy in the African continent, a decision was taken to mandate the next meeting of the SI Africa Committee to present a resolution on democracy in Africa to be discussed and considered at the next Council.

A special [message to the Council](#) from jailed Belarusian opposition leader and former presidential candidate Mikalai Statkevich was read out. Despite the calls for his release by the SI and a number of governments and international organisations, Statkevich is still deprived of his liberty and many of his most fundamental rights in a Belarusian prison. In his letter he thanked the SI and its member parties for their constant support and work in favour of rights and freedoms in Belarus.

On the **second main theme**, the social democratic vision for the global economy, speakers from different regions and backgrounds contributed with their perspectives. ([List of speakers](#)) Recognising that in the years ahead the global economy as well as national economies will face huge challenges, the interventions on this subject and the

[resolution](#) adopted, highlight the need for progressive forces to lead the way for banking and structural reforms, action against illegal tax evasion and tax avoidance, global development, the fight against inequality and poverty, and for social solidarity, clean energy and green growth. The adopted resolution outlines an agenda for growth, jobs, sustainable development and human solidarity, and calls for cooperation between progressive forces and civil society organisations to achieve these key objectives.

In line with a decision taken by the Presidium at its meeting at the United Nations Headquarters on 26 September, the SI Council also adopted a position on the current and important question of **espionage and surveillance**. A [declaration](#) on this issue outlines the need to respect international law and its institutions to rebuild a loss of trust in governments resulting from recent revelations of state-sanctioned cyber-surveillance.

On Puerto Rico, the Council reaffirmed the [resolution](#) of its previous meeting adopted in Cascais, and decided that the SI would attend the examination of this case by the Decolonisation Committee at the UN.

The two statutory committees, Ethics and SIFAC, which had been newly constituted in line with the reforms adopted by the SI to secure a fair geographical representation of the membership of the organisation and were thus more open and democratic, presented their reports to the Council. In his report, Gilles Mahieu (PS, Belgium), the new chair of the SI Ethics Committee, informed the Council that the Committee had discussed and agreed on a new set of [internal rules of procedure](#) for its work. In analysing the applications for membership, the Committee had one recommendation to put to this Council, to grant observer member status to the Justice and Welfare Party (JWP) of Somaliland, pending ratification by the next Congress in line with the SI Statutes. The Council approved the Committee report and agreed on the recommendation made for the JWP of Somaliland.

The Council equally received a report of the SI Finance and Administration Committee (SIFAC), presented by Maurice Poler (AD, Venezuela), co-chair of SIFAC. He reported on the work of the committee and on the current financial situation of the SI, drawing attention to the [list of outstanding membership fees](#). The Council was informed that the committee was unanimous in that no unilateral decisions on the level of membership fees due by any member party could be accepted, as in accordance with the statutes these were to be recommended by the committee and approved by the Council. The Committee had, as mandated, discussed new membership fee levels and agreed on a [budget for 2014](#) and approved the [Audited Accounts for 2012](#), both of which were presented to the Council and adopted, along with the committee's report.

An election was held to fill the vacancy for an SI vice-president from Latin America, with Rafael Michelini, leader of the New Space party (NE), Uruguay, unanimously elected. In line with the decision of the previous Council with regard to the composition of the Ethics Committee, the Party of Bulgarian Social Democrats (PBSD) was elected as the remaining member of this statutory committee of the SI.

The [Secretary General's Report](#) on the recent activities of the organisation since the last Council was introduced.

At the closing of the meeting, the President and Secretary General of the SI once more reiterated the sincere gratitude that had been expressed by all delegates ([List of Participants](#)) to the hosts for their fraternal hospitality. The GUP Vice Chair, Frank

Loğoğlu thanked all those who had attended the meeting on behalf of the host party.



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