

30 June 1997



**DECLARATION OF THE MEETING OF THE
SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR
CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE, SICEE**

Rome, Italy, 27-28 June 1997

Dear Comrade,

I am pleased to send herewith, for your information, the Declaration adopted by the Socialist International Committee for Central and Eastern Europe, SICEE, following its discussions at its meeting in Rome last Friday and Saturday 27-28 June.

The meeting, which was hosted by the Democratic Party of the Left (PDS) of Italy, discussed an agenda which included the perspectives on the process of integration of the countries of this region in multilateral institutions, received reports on the national situations and decided on its future programme of activities.

I also enclose the list of participants at our meeting, which was chaired by the Co-Chairs of SICEE, Piero Fassino, of the PDS, Italy, and László Kovács, of the Hungarian Socialist Party, MSzP.

Fraternal regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Luis Ayala', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Luis Ayala
Secretary General

ROME DECLARATION

1. Central and Eastern Europe has seen a transition to democracy and the market economy which has enabled most of these countries to undergo a major modernisation.

This is particularly true in some Central and Eastern European countries - namely Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Hungary, Slovakia and the Baltic states - where there are high growth rates.

However, we have also witnessed acute social inequalities and imbalances which are all the more reason for us to advocate policies aimed at a greater balance between modernity and solidarity, between the rules of the market and the redistribution of wealth.

Moreover, strong economic dynamism has not always been accompanied by adequate overall democratic development.

Social democratic and progressive forces are therefore faced with the task of bringing to completion the political and economic transition in these countries, with the objectives of social progress, equality and democracy.

2. A crucial step in tying the countries of the region into this process will be through their integration into the European Union, to which all of Central and Eastern Europe's countries look as a means of supporting their democratic stability while favouring the completion of their economic and social modernisation.

Launching the negotiations on the Union's enlargement according to the established time frame, within the first months of 1998, is crucial, as is the need to conduct the negotiations in a way which assures equal opportunity for all of the candidate countries.

Concurrently, through Cooperation Agreements and through the further use of the instrument of "association", the European Union is called on also to offer prospects for strengthened cooperation and integration for countries which are not today candidates for membership.

3. The security and stability which the countries of Central and Eastern Europe rightly desire can best be achieved through economic, social, environmental and political means. At the same time, peace and stability throughout the entire continent are possible if there is a common responsibility for implementing a new architecture of security. The Act signed in Paris by the members of NATO and Russia, and the bilateral accords signed by the Ukraine with NATO and Russia are a step in this direction.

This is the context in which we need to place the enlargement of NATO, the objective of which is not to threaten anyone, but instead to reassure all involved. This is why the enlargement of the Alliance must respond to some fundamental security needs: it must be balanced in terms of the various areas of Eastern, Central and South-Eastern Europe; it must "keep its doors open" to more than one phase of enlargement; it must use the Partnership for Peace (PFP), and the recently created Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council to provide the necessary security and stability for the entire region.

The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) should be enabled to play a stronger role in conflict-prevention and conflict-settlement and in the promotion of a pan-European security order and of democracy within states.

Within this framework the European Union (EU) must acquire an increasing security and defence identity, and the Western European Union (WEU) can be a means to this end.

4. The SI urges that positive, multilateral and bilateral measures be taken to ensure that those countries which do not qualify for the first wave of either EU or NATO enlargement continue to be deeply involved in the developments taking place in Europe.

Institutions for regional cooperation can play a strategic role in this process. Among these are the Central European Initiative (CEI), the Black Sea Cooperation Council, the Baltic Cooperation Council, the South-Eastern Cooperation Initiative (SECI), and other forms of multilateral cooperation among states in the region. These institutions can fulfil two functions. They can favour a coherent common action among countries that are "in" and "out", so avoiding the enlargement of the EU and NATO provoking feelings of exclusion or new dividing lines through the heart of Europe. Regional institutions can also be tools for infrastructural, social and economic modernisation in countries of the region.

5. Transition in these countries is not simply linked to the economic dimension. The move from the authoritarianism of the state-party apparatus to democracy also entails the implementation of structures needed to carry out "democratic institution-building".

Central to this are:

- guaranteeing fundamental social rights;
- strong, internally democratic and pluralistic political parties;
- the establishment of the rule of law and a pluralistic society;
- the setting up of an appropriate legal and regulatory framework;
- the training of public sector managers and civil servants;
- ensuring pluralism in the media and an information sector which is equally accessible to all;

- the setting up of a new educational curriculum free from ideological oppression;
- the re-organisation of each social system in a way which, while refusing the statist logic of the past, does not however jeopardise fundamental social, individual and collective rights;
- the recognition of minority rights and implementation of policies capable of guaranteeing multi-cultural and multi-ethnic principles.
- policies which ensure sustainable development.

The Council of Europe can provide an important contribution to achieving these objectives.

6. Stability in the Balkans is an absolute priority for the security of the entire continent. The international community- and in particular the European Union - must assume a common responsibility for helping the countries of the region whose transition, for historical reasons, is slower and more difficult.

The reformist policies launched by Romania's new government - to which the Social Democratic Union contributes - prove that within the process of integration there is a real possibility to recover from the delays in the economic and political situation inherited from the past.

The recent elections in Bulgaria, although characterised by the victory of the centre-right forces, have opened up the road to stable institutions capable of promoting a period of reform.

It is also important to pursue concerted action aimed at guaranteeing stability in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, which underlines its important contribution to peace and stability in the Balkans.

After the success of the opposition in the local elections, the next elections in Serbia and Montenegro should give the opportunity for a democratic evolution which overcomes the limits and the obstacles to a full implementation of democratic pluralism in the Yugoslav Federation. The international community should act to ensure that the elections are free and fair, and take place with open and pluralistic media.

Turkey's political evolution and democratic stability are crucial for the security of the entire region. For this reason, there is a need for political action which, while keeping Turkey firmly tied to the Euro-Atlantic institutions, favours the full recognition of civil rights and democratic principles.

7. It is of decisive importance to safeguard and consolidate the Dayton Accords which, thanks to the presence of IFOR/SFOR, guarantee peace in Bosnia. The consolidation of peace requires secure state structures and civil society.

As fragile and difficult as it is, there are no prospects for a different peace in Bosnia, and questioning it would be a very serious mistake.

The deadlock in the peace process must be overcome, and the Accords need to be fully carried out. There needs to be an effective implementation of Bosnian-Herzegovinian state institutions and the carrying out of normal, pluralistic municipal elections scheduled for September. The regional disarmament accords signed in Florence should also be fully implemented, the gradual return of refugees to their homes should be aided and pursued. The work of the International War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague should continue to be supported. These political objectives can be obtained only with parallel efforts for economic reconstruction with financial help provided for all of the entities and communities which make up Bosnia-Herzegovina.

A contribution to peace in Bosnia and in the region can come from re-enforcement of democracy in Croatia, where in the recent presidential elections the forces of the opposition, the SDP and others, obtained a growing consensus.

8. The international community can have an equally decisive role in Albania. The dissolution of the institutions and economy, and the risk of anarchy in Albania have been avoided by the involvement of the European Union, the OSCE and the countries which have contributed to the Italian-led Military Protection Force. The national reconciliation government, created through the collaboration of all of the country's political forces, has been able to launch the reconstruction of the state's structures. It is of decisive importance that the elections on 29 June be free and fair and that following the two rounds of elections there be a phase of political stability in which all the parties accept the results and play a positive role within Albania's democratic institutions.

To attain this objective, we strongly support the work of the High Representative of the OSCE, Franz Vranitzky.

9. Russia and its future situation are fundamental for the prospects of the entire European continent.

Although faced with numerous difficulties and acute social contradictions, this great country has seen widespread economic change. This has not been accompanied by a modernisation of the state's structures and by a spread of political democracy.

The international community's task is therefore to establish the widest possible forms of political, military, economic and cultural cooperation. This will support the establishment of the political and economic standards of a modern democracy. The transformation of the G7 into G8 sanctioned at Denver is a step in this direction, which needs to be followed by others, aimed at furthering the effective development of democracy in Russia.

10. The Caucasian Republics, where there are still unresolved conflicts and a difficult transition to democracy which are delaying economic and social development, require the elaboration of a strategy for cooperation.

The pursuit of a cooperation strategy with the Eurasian nations and the states of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) is equally important. The international community must extend relations with and opportunities for these countries.

11. The role of the forces of social democracy in achieving these objectives is crucial. All the more so today, when the SI has member parties in all of the countries of Central and South-Eastern Europe and where several of these are in government.

The SI and its parties feel a responsibility to respond, with constant political initiatives and adequate programmes, to the demand for democracy, integration and development coming from public opinion in those countries.

At the same time, the SI sees an urgent need to favour the growth of a social democratic presence in Russia and in the other states of the CIS. To this end, it intends to establish a special action programme.
