



The Progressive Alliance and the International Union of Socialist Youth (IUSY) to the European Leaders on the Occasion of the Extraordinary Justice and Home Affairs Council on 14 September 2015 in Brussels:

Refugees are Welcome – Towards a Progressive Refugee Policy

According to the UNCHR- United Nations Refugee Agency around 60 million people are displaced involuntarily because of war, conflict and oppression. Half of them are children. The present crisis of frightening proportions is said to be the worst refugee crisis since World War II. Most of them are local refugees and a sizeable number end up in the neighbouring countries. Some of them try to continue to Europe, and few manage to reach their dream for peace and freedom.

In view of the current situation, with people who are forced to flee from their home countries via the Mediterranean Sea, Turkey and the Western Balkans into the European Union, Europe is facing an urgent political challenge. Hundreds of thousands or even millions of people from the Middle East and Africa have left their homelands, often with huge risks involved. Those who arrive in Europe have big hopes for a better future there. They are looking for freedom and security, hoping to be able to live in a better society where justice and solidarity are principled norms. The refugees count on our fundamental values. However, European politics have until now failed to show that Europe complies with these core values and fulfils the high expectations of upholding human dignity and shouldering the reception of persecuted human beings. It is time for actions that guarantee all people safety and respect for the fundamental human rights.

When voices calling for sealing off the borders and deterrence are becoming louder and louder, Socialists and Social Democrats must remember the very fundamental values in which so many people in need trust when they look at Europe. These values are also the fundamental values of international social democracy: Freedom, justice and solidarity. People who come to Europe are looking for freedom, because they are being persecuted and fear for their life; in order to find a decent life they put their lives at great risk. We need more global justice, because the aim of globalization is not the wealth of a few, but justice for all. The developed countries will also only be able to maintain their prosperity if all of us



learn again to share globally and help the people in their countries of origin to promote peace, prosperity and security. And in many countries the people show solidarity and are engaged in initiatives to help refugees by, among other things, making generous donations.

The commitments for meaningful actions by our political family, our expressed sympathy for the refugees, the solidarity we demonstrate show that we are all one people ready to consolidate the strong foundations of Social Democracy. This is the opposite model to sealing off the borders and deterrence and to the ideas of the political right-wing forces in Europe and worldwide.

For progressive, social democratic and socialist forces it is clear: It is our duty to help people who flee from war and civil war, calamity and persecution, seeking protection for themselves and their children, and we want that a new homeland is offered to them that provides them with freedom and security. This is a demand for decency, humanitarianism and compassion, but also translates concretely political values.

At the present stage Europe is receiving a high number of refugees, but we can do more. The more so as countries that are by far poorer, such as Turkey, Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Lebanon or Jordan, are taking the far bigger responsibility to offer the refugees shelter and security. Lebanon, for example, which has a population of five million, has already taken in 1,3 million refugees.

Moreover, in view of the catastrophic situation in many countries in the Middle East and Africa this development is not likely to improve in the near future. We reaffirm that the whole of Europe together must receive refugees not based on volumes, but based on a human rights approach that puts the need of the refugees in the centre. A human right approach to the refugee issue includes a fundamental change of the reception and integration policy.

- **Possibilities to offer freedom and security for people who flee** require safer and legal ways to enter Europe. Freedom of movement is a human right. It is not acceptable that some European countries refuse to assume their responsibility to live up to international conventions to help people in need of freedom and security. In times of crises it is important that all together stand up firmly for human rights. It is a shame that only few of the European countries are taking the biggest responsibility. If all countries together took equal responsibility, Europe would have been able to help even more and achieve



more than it is doing today and people in need wouldn't have needed to lose their life while struggling to find a passage to freedom and security.

- **Possibilities of integration for people who flee** and seek to find a new homeland in Europe for themselves and their children do not only have to find their way around, but they must also be given a decent chance to become a part of the new society. The more openly, and in a friendly and welcoming manner they are received and adequate shelter and help is provided to them as well as the right to work is given, the quicker and easier it will be for them to settle down and build a new life in their new homelands.
- **A society for all:** Successful migration policies also require a welfare state that provides opportunities for all its people, regardless of if they are new or old inhabitants. The earlier the authorities start to support municipalities in order to create sufficient places at day nurseries, schools and build enough affordable housing, the earlier equality will be a reality.
- **A Europe for all:** The migration movement towards Europe and the reasons for the flight from the countries in Middle East and Africa puts the values of the European Union at test. If Europe does not manage to achieve a common and humanitarian refugee policy there is a risk of it suffering a huge loss; it is the loss of the humane orientation and of the common values in Europe. And it is not only that: among others, Italy, Greece and currently Macedonia are struggling with dramatic problems. While the rich continent of Europe apparently seems to be on holidays, the United Nations have to carry out support actions in these countries, which would have better served much poorer regions. Europe's foundation is based on the values of enlightenment and humanitarianism. The European idea is based on practical and tangible solidarity- which can't be practiced within the framework of the Dublin regulation. This is the time to think of better and more solidarity policy. This is what the European Union has to prove now. Europe also must stop seeing refugees as a burden and instead see the advantage of new people contributing to the European societies. When people are being given possibility to become a part of societies they become an important economic, but also cultural and social contributors.
- And finally: Europe needs a new impetus in **fighting the causes for the flight**. Europe should take a lead in this regard, with new foreign and security policy initiatives. This



starts with the countries of Europe itself. It is simply not acceptable that people from Member states of the European Union have the feeling of being discriminated against and excluded and that the only possible solution for them is to leave their country. The EU cannot remain impassive and indeed inactive where discrimination occurs, e.g., against the Roma community, in countries that are candidates for EU membership; neither must the EU tolerate corruption, bad governance and miserable education and deplorable advancement opportunities. European politics must overcome its unilateral orientation towards the single market and become again a society that strives for better livelihood opportunities for all, underscored by social security and justice as the guiding objectives of its practical policies. Moreover, criminal networks of smugglers and traffickers of human beings who exploit the misery of those seeking protection to enrich themselves unscrupulously, need to be dismantled and the perpetrators brought to justice.

War and civil war, poverty and repressive systems are the main causes for the current huge flight movement as the citizens of those afflicted countries see no improved perspectives to enjoy a fair life. Only together can we contribute to combating the causes of this flight, by empowering, promoting regional cooperation, collaboration, investments in the infrastructure and the economic development of those countries with good governance as the underlying principle.

The refugee crisis is not only a challenge for Europe. We call for all states globally to share the responsibility. If anyone can solve it, it is the Progressives and Social Democrats, who can address these tasks for open societies and possibility for integration: decent and human rights approach to the reception of refugees, social cohesion and a policy of solidarity for the protection of people who flee and combating the causes for the flight. Freedom, justice, peace and solidarity have always been universal and international goals for us. It is therefore time to for us to start acting upon our values and beliefs. Let us walk the talk!