

THE DAKAR DECLARATION

Original: French

The Socialist International Africa Committee met at Dakar on 25-26 July, under the chairmanship of its Chair, comrade Ousmane Tanor Dieng, and in the presence of comrade Habib Thiam, Prime Minister of Senegal, and of comrade Pierre Mauroy, President of the Socialist International. On the agenda were three major topics:

- Democratic and humanitarian challenges facing Africa - the social democratic response;
- The examination of recent and forthcoming elections in Africa;
- The question of sustainable development.

The Africa Committee considers that basically the first two of these themes - democratic challenges and electoral management - are organic parts of the same question.

From the start of the 1990s, the democratic process in Africa has involved the continent in a dynamic process of change that is the result of a double pressure - on the one side from African popular forces, and on the other from the international community with its greater concern for the general establishment of democratic principles. International pressure finds political expression in the so-called policy of conditionality. It is applied both by international bodies, mainly the Bretton Woods institutions, and by western powers. From this point of view the La Baule speech was decisive in setting up these new policies.

This democratisation process, the result of powerful historical factors, gives every impression of being irreversible, despite certain worrying issues.

It will without any doubt determine the political development of Africa in the closing years of this century. It has already brought about significant changes, and structural shifts which are giving birth to a new democratic and social order at every level.

Today new governments are in power, legitimately constituted and arising from the popular will as expressed in free, fair and transparent elections. Institutional reforms have been implemented:

- new parliaments fulfilling their role of overseeing government actions and drawing up laws, even if great efforts are still needed for the improvement and further democratisation of parliamentary work;
- reformed judicial systems which are less dependent on the executive;
- decentralised local or regional communities;

- bodies for the regulation of the press and of political communications.

There is thus emerging a new political and social framework more appropriate to the constitutional State founded on the rule of law and its values. Among others:

- the primacy of the law, and in particular the subordination of the executive to the law;
- the existence of national assemblies elected by universal suffrage;
- the overseeing of the executive by the legislature;
- scrupulous respect for republican institutions and the foundations of the constitutional State;
- guarantees of fundamental rights and freedoms;
- the independence of the judiciary;
- free, pluralist and transparent elections.

We are also seeing the emergence of an altogether new social space, built upon new foundations and marked by an explosion of new social energies, which is encouraging the continuing development of this process of democratisation.

Thus, alongside the political organisations, one sees a strong mobilisation of African civil society (organisations of workers, women, young people, voluntary organisations, the private sector) representing and expressing strong social demands and aspiring to greater participation.

Whilst welcoming these undeniable political advances, the Socialist International Africa Committee must work and campaign more strongly than ever for their consolidation, their progressive expansion and their intensification. As a centre of political initiative, it must mobilise its forces to strengthen this trend, supporting and guiding it. And this all the more as it is still not only fragile but vulnerable to today's worrying developments (the resurgence of military coups d'état, ethnic conflict and civil war etc.).

Such events not only block the process but entail social reverses which put a mortgage on the future of the continent.

By threatening peace and establishing insecurity, by destroying even the social and national fabric of certain States which are dislocated and drowning in chaos, these events give rise to humanitarian challenges of an extraordinary dimension. In this respect the situation that has developed in Central Africa and the countries of the Great Lakes region remains a source of considerable anxiety.

How then is one to imagine, plan and bring about sustainable and human development in our different countries? Certainly, these urgent and unavoidable pre-requisites of humanitarian assistance, democracy and peace confront us social democrats with a triple challenge of major historic proportions.

To rise to this challenge, Africa, which has already made considerable efforts in the context of the OAU, in particular through the mechanism for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts, must be able to count on international solidarity. The parties of the Socialist International have a particular responsibility in this regard, especially those socialists or social democrats in government.

Regarding electoral matters, the Socialist International Africa Committee reaffirms its commitment to free, fair and transparent elections.

The Africa Committee notes that these inviolable principles are not everywhere respected, despite declarations of allegiance to electoral democracy. With the exception of certain countries (Botswana, Mali, Cape Verde, Mauritius, Senegal etc.), and in spite of the progress made since the end of the 1980s by democratic forces, and by socialists and social democrats in particular, resistant forces remains strong:

- the intervention of the military on the political scene (Burundi, Niger, Nigeria);
- the systematic violation of human rights and freedoms;
- intimidatory manoeuvres;
- the undermining of the electoral process (Niger, Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon);
- the persistence of single parties behind a democratic facade (Kenya, Uganda etc.).

After analysing the situations prevailing in a number of African countries, the member parties of the Socialist International Africa Committee reaffirmed the necessity of ensuring that the electoral processes are equitable by subjecting them to internationally recognised standards. These require:

- participation of political parties in all stages of the electoral process;
- proper identification of voters;
- secrecy of the ballot;
- overseeing of elections by the parties;
- legal provisions to ensure honesty in the vote-counting;
- independent judicial bodies to deal with challenges to the election results;
- security of the voting procedure.

If these rules are not scrupulously observed, the Africa Committee fears that the way will be open for strategies of violence, and a weakening of the socialist and social democratic forces which aim to take power only through the ballot-box. But it leaves it to each country to take the necessary steps, taking account of its own situation, for the implementation of these universal standards, and in particular for the establishment of its own system of electoral regulation.

The Africa Committee is pleased to note the agreement signed in London on 23 July between the Foreign Ministers of France and the United Kingdom on the necessity of observing a common code for arms exports and of strengthening democracy and development in Africa.

The Socialist International Africa Committee decided:

1. To give its support to partners of the Socialist International who have been victims of flagrant violations of their freedoms, by organising two missions, one to Central Africa (Equatorial Guinea and Cameroon), the other to West Africa (Niger). Further missions are also planned in the context of support for democratic forces in other countries of the region (Togo and Kenya).

2. To call on sponsor countries to make their budgetary assistance conditional on respect for the rules of democracy.

3. To recommend to the European Union and the European Parliament, within the framework of their programme of support for the democratisation of Africa:

- to assist with the establishment of population registers that would allow reliable electoral registers to be drawn up;
- to help in the modernisation of electoral processes in Africa;
- in liaison with various foundations to focus their intervention on civic education and decentralisation.

4. To study the possibilities for the regulation of democracy through the funding of political parties and electoral campaigns on the basis of ceilings on expenditure.

5. To work to ensure that a commercial policy on arms exports is included in the new European Union Treaty concluded at Amsterdam.

6. To express its support for the comrades of the African Party for Solidarity and Justice, ADEMA-PASJ, Mali, and their efforts to consolidate the multi-party democracy in that country.

7. To support the candidature of comrade Miguel Angel Martinez for the presidency of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Political parties must respect the rules of the democratic game: parties winning an electoral majority must respect and cause to be respected, to deepen and to perfect the constitutional State founded on the rule of law; and minority parties must democratically accept the verdict of the elections. All parties must accept the recognised international standards as they apply to elections. It is for the majority to wield governmental power in accordance with the programme accepted by the people. It is for

the opposition to put forward alternative proposals as a basis for a democratic alternation of government.

The Socialist International Africa Committee is convinced that democracy and development must be closely associated: it is evident that there can be no democracy without development, and that development without democracy is incomplete. The experience of African countries since independence clearly demonstrates this. The stability achieved by autocratic regimes has led to under-development. It is now indispensable that a concern for stability should take account of popular support, that is, of the people's aspirations to democracy. The Socialist International Africa Committee therefore reiterates that it is the people, and not the military, who are the sole judge. According to the republican concept, the army is the servant of the law. Above and beyond all these considerations, the Socialist International Africa Committee believes that a more consistent attention must be given to the problems of development.

The economic problems of the African continent have been a major concern to the member parties of the Africa Committee.

This being so, the Committee welcomed the analyses offered by the Joint Working Group set up by the Parliamentary Group of the Party of European Socialists and the African and Caribbean members of the Socialist International. It has decided to adopt the report entitled *"Together in the 21st Century. A Partnership for Sustainable Development"*.

As a way to deepen the analysis of the difficult economic situation in Africa, taking into account the realities of globalisation, the Africa Committee has decided to organise a colloquium to develop responses to the problems thus posed.

In addition, the Socialist International Africa Committee puts particular emphasis on the following priorities:

1. The renewal of the Lomé Agreement is a legitimate demand, and Lomé 5 should focus on sectors that can help ensure growth, and on a more qualitatively discriminating basis.
2. The integration-regionalisation dimension should be emphasised, and should not be diluted in a monetary-budgetary approach to globalisation, which calls for the consolidation of the viable sub-regional units that exist in different parts of the continent.
3. The growth of the rural sector in Africa remains a major concern and imperative. African agriculture must seek self-sufficiency and security of the food-supply, and every effort must be made to make it competitive within twenty years.

To do this, the member parties of the Africa Committee emphasise the importance of mastering problems of water-supply, the adoption of appropriate agricultural techniques, the establishment of a proper balance between subsistence-crops and cash-crops, the adoption of effective health and education policies, and the provision of the transport infrastructure indispensable for the proper circulation of people and goods.

4. The preservation and improvement of the environment in Africa remains an essential concern. In this perspective, the fight against desertification and dumping, and the unrestrained exploitation of the seas and forests must be taken into account in the implementation of environmental policy.

5. Development aid is still indispensable for the economic development of the continent. It should be more qualitatively discriminating, and focus on the more productive sectors in terms of development (agriculture, roads, water, energy).

The UN target level of 0.7 per cent of GDP must be achieved, especially by European governments run by socialists and social democrats.

6. As regards debt, care must be taken that efforts at structural adjustment are not aimed exclusively at the repayment of external debts.

Debts must be arranged in the context of the promotion of production and investment.

7. Development is not a disembodied concept. Its crucible is the cultural environment. Education, the promotion of cultural values, and the conservation of cultural heritage are all elements essential to identity which should not be diluted in a purely economic approach.

Development, environment and culture are organically related, for they are all concerned in the future of humanity. Socialists must integrate these cultural factors in their models of economic development.
