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Towards a strong progressive global agenda

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Foreign policy has always been central to the European debate, but in the last few years, a number of challenges have brought it even more to the fore. The sudden conflict in Ukraine led to a climate of confrontation unseen in the post-Cold War era, and to a serious breach of the European peace order. The speed at which events unfolded took the world by surprise, and the complexity of the situation did not always allow for a coherent response. This underlined the need to reassess relations with our Eastern Neighbours and Russia. Similarly, the European Union needs a global strategy to respond to the migration crisis in the Mediterranean and to fight human trafficking, as the Mediterranean cannot become the graveyard of Europe.

The Arab uprisings of early 2011 created an atmosphere of hope and announced the start of a new democratic transition. When we look at the region today, a gloomier picture comes to mind. The protracted conflict in **Syria** affects millions of people every day while civil wars and tribal infighting are ravaging Libya, Iraq and Yemen. Egypt continues to face political and social difficulties. The **Middle East Peace Process collapsed**, while calls for peaceful alternatives and a two state solution remain unheard. The **brutal force of groups like the Islamic State (IS) and Boko Haram**, together with a rise in terrorist attacks and the savage acts of extremist Islamist groups in Iraq and Syria have sent shock waves throughout the globe. Tunisia remains one of the few countries that managed to go through a positive transition. The Sahel has become a ticking time bomb, plagued by bloody religious wars, abject poverty, lawlessness and severe draughts. Part of these problems stem from an increase in poverty and inequality while resulting in massive migratory waves towards the EU and the loss of thousands of lives in the process. This shows that development cooperation and humanitarian aid are important tools to implement a fair European wide approach toward migration.

Meanwhile, the ongoing debates on **climate change** have gained renewed momentum in light of the debates on energy diversification and an increase in extreme weather disasters, often forcing people from their homes. This has also become a crucial theme in the discussions on the **Sustainable Development Goals**, which will be agreed on by the end of this year.

This is a crucial time for progressives. With shifting alliances and new and unpredictable balances of power, we need to re-evaluate our place in the world and take a strong progressive stance in line with our core principles of human rights, gender equality and social

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justice. The party of European socialists and its member parties have an important role to play in building alliances with political parties and regional networks around the world. Regional and global progressive networks provide useful forums for the PES to support progressive parties across the world. The PES, in this new and complex international environment, expresses its commitment to strengthen the capacity of the EU to play a crucial role in analysing and acting on the global scene. The roles of the EU and the High Representative have to be a strong point of reference in promoting the vision of the Union and the values of peace, justice and democracy all over the world. Working together we can support progressive forces to play a positive role in the development of stable and effective democracies in their countries. Only with a strong unified voice will we be able to tackle the challenges ahead.

1. A diversified European Neighbourhood and enlargement policy

Respect for democracy, human rights, gender equality and the rule of law should be at the heart of our European Neighbourhood Policy. At the same time, to deal with today's challenges, we need to understand the multi-faceted and diverse causes that they originate from. Countries in the South and East of Europe are each defined by their own history and socio-economic background, which also determine their relationship with the EU. Therefore, we want to emphasize the need for **a diversified approach that acknowledges the differences between countries and offers tailor-made instruments to establish a secure and prosperous neighbourhood**. Fundamental freedoms, in particular freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly and the realisation of economic, social and cultural rights should be given special consideration in the development of the European Neighbourhood Policy.

The EU has to remain a positive pole of attraction. We need to actively support reforms in the countries of the Western Balkans and promote an agenda of social justice, universal social protection and inclusive socio-economic development. Many countries in the Western Balkans are facing difficult socio-economic and structural problems that are slowing down their EU integration process. We need to be a reliable partner to our neighbours and offer tangible results to those that make significant progress. EU enlargement policy has proven its benefits in the past, and remains one of the most important foreign policy instruments at the EU's disposal. The EU should remain committed to enlargement negotiations with candidate countries, who can join once they fully comply with the Copenhagen criteria. The prospect of EU membership should remain open for those countries that respect and uphold European values.

The crisis in Ukraine is a major challenge for peace and security in the European continent. We strongly insist on full implementation of the Minsk agreements and call for a comprehensive political solution of the conflict. We are convinced that this conflict can only be resolved by diplomatic means, in compliance with international law, and with full respect for the territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine. We believe in the necessity of constructive dialogue with Russia and we deem it crucial for the fulfilment of the obligations that Russia itself has taken for a peaceful and sustainable solution of the crisis. All parties have to work for this solution. In the long run, enduring stability on the European continent can only be achieved through cooperation. A serious reconciliation process needs to start within Ukraine, with full respect of rule of law, which is actively supported by the international community. Promised reforms with regards to corruption and decentralisation need to be implemented.



2. Peace in the Middle East and the Mediterranean

The Middle East today represents an intricate web of shifting geopolitical interests, with multiple religious- and other groups fighting a complex battle of influence and power, often driven by foreign powers. The rising force of IS feeds on existing tensions, inter- and intra-religious differences, stark socio-economic inequalities, and protracted conflicts and unrest across the whole Middle East.

The latest efforts to revive the Israeli-Palestinian peace process did unfortunately not succeed. The absence of a two-state solution and the dire humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip have caused a long-lasting political crisis. **Nonetheless we maintain our support for the establishment of a viable Palestinian State, in accordance with UN resolutions, alongside a safe and secure Israel.** All the efforts from the EU High Representative, Israel and Palestine to advance peace should be welcomed.

The crisis in Cyprus still and unfortunately could not be solved and the failure of the Annan plan discouraged further attempts to come to a solution. The EU should support an inclusive dialogue in Cyprus, in order to come to a solution that is fully supported by both sides.

The situation in Libya represents a crucial challenge for security and peace in the region and in Europe. The international community needs to assist Libya in seeking a political solution to the crisis so it can form an independent government of national unity. This is a prerequisite to counter the danger posed by terrorism and radicalism.

We believe it is time for the EU to take up a stronger role in the Middle East. The crucial part the EU has played in negotiating a nuclear agreement with Iran shows that it has the potential to be an influential diplomatic actor in the region. As socialists and democrats, we should tackle crucial violations of women's rights and adopt a human-rights based approach. **Together with our partners and allies, we should work on a comprehensive approach involving all the key players in the region.** We have to depart from the era of proxy wars destabilising the whole area and beyond, and enter into a strategic dialogue. The multiple lines of fracture, which confront actors with opposing interests at the expense of innocent local populations, must be brought together under a new framework of dialogue and cooperation, which the EU can promote within the international community. This strategy from the MENA region should include a focus on human rights and a balanced approach on countering terrorism and security policy.

The **initiatives** set up in the 1990s, such as the Process of Barcelona and, subsequently, the Union for the Mediterranean, have achieved limited results, due in part to the fact that European countries have found themselves immersed in one of the greatest economic crises, lasting now more than seven years, and also because the Arab countries have experienced profound changes as a result of the so-called Arab Spring. However, The PES remains fully committed to the aims of these initiatives, and reaffirms the need to create a space for cooperation and dialogue between all the countries of the region, to enable us to jointly address the global challenges we face. We need to promote a renewed approach to European Mediterranean policy, based on the shared responsibility of all. And, therefore, give a new, multilateral, dimension to relations, based on broad cooperation and solidarity, in which both shores participate under equal conditions in order to define a global Mediterranean initiative to regain and revitalize the spirit of the Barcelona Process.

The alternative of carrying on with business as usual is no longer acceptable neither from the tactical nor from the strategic point of view.



3. Security, defence and peace building

The changing internal and external threats the EU is facing have given new impetus to the debates on security and defence. While it is imperative that our citizens live in a secure and peaceful environment, we have to tread carefully in order not to compromise our fundamental rights and freedoms. As progressives, we have to come forward with our own agenda which combines our message of peace and human rights with the need for a safer world and aligns our priorities in the field of human rights, development, security and defence. We must support human rights defenders and the people struggling for democracy, social justice and non-discrimination.

The global challenges and realities clearly show that the boundaries between internal and external security are becoming more and more blurred. We need to develop a comprehensive framework for the EU's common security and defence policy, which is in line with the EU's humanitarian and development priorities.

War, conflicts and instability affect both men and women. Yet women often remain underrepresented at decision making levels and excluded from the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts. Specific attention should be paid to women under the UN 1325 resolution to guarantee their rights, participation and protection, including access to SRHR as part of adequate health assistance.

We need to establish long-term strategies and strengthen the EU's capacity to react immediately. A deeper and more efficient cooperation on internal and external security, civilian conflict prevention, defence and military matters will prepare the EU, not only to defend itself, but also to support peacebuilding efforts worldwide. At the same time, we have to prefer non-violent, civilian conflict solutions. We must promote first steps towards a gradual disarmament and restrictions of the international arms trade for a more peaceful world. Sustainable and social development is a new name for peace. Confronted with the instability at Europe's borders we need to be more careful in our weapon export to other countries. The EU should speak with one voice when it comes to peace, security and human rights, but should also act accordingly. That means that member states should apply the same strict rules when selling weapons.

4. Strong global alliances

In a rapidly changing global environment we need to expand our partnerships with different regions of the world and jointly define geostrategic scenarios. These partnerships must be built on shared common values, economic growth, security cooperation and fair trade. We want a robust transatlantic relationship to tackle global challenges ahead. Furthermore we should strengthen relationships with **like-minded partners in Latin America and the Caribbean, ASEAN and the African Union, by supporting their regional integration processes.**

Especially in **the Sahel** we must upgrade our role in order to become a key partner for economic, human and democratic development. We cannot stand by while a whole region perishes in a vicious spiral of violence, poverty and religious strife. We have to learn from past and recent experiences and address the situation hands on, before it becomes uncontrollable and spills over to the whole African continent. The world cannot afford another generation that grows up in despair. Increased cooperation and investment to eradicate poverty, promote education and inclusiveness, allow universal access to health care, promote sexual and reproductive rights for all women and men and safeguard security in bordering countries must be at the core of our actions on the continent. We must also



ensure that our actions in the EU do not negatively affect the poorest people on the planet and it is high time that the resources of the African continent benefit to its people.

5. Sustainable Development

2015 is a crucial year for international development. The UN will publish a new framework to follow the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The EU is already the world's largest donor of development assistance. However, in many countries the support for development assistance is under pressure. It is imperative that EU Member States honour their commitment to spend 0.7 per cent of GNI on official development assistance in order to build a fairer, democratic and more sustainable development in the world." As progressives, we will play a critical role in the development of these Sustainable Development Goals which must be universal, ambitious, transformative and inclusive in nature with a strong objective – leaving no one behind. Equality and solidarity remain at the core of our progressive human-rights based message. Respect for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including the abolition of the death penalty worldwide, is instrumental for the EU to establish itself as a primary defender of human rights. We should also remain ambitious when it comes to women's rights and gender equality. While the UN has reached an agreement on having gender equality and women's rights as a Stand Alone goal as part of the Sustainable Development Goals, as social democrats we need to ensure that gender equality is an integral part of all SDG's and that it is adequately funded.

We firmly believe that strong Sustainable Development Goals, supported by substantial means, can lead the path toward a better and fairer world. We want to advance a common global agenda that will **reduce inequality, tackle climate change and the issue of climate refugees and promote universal social protection. Our concrete proposals include supporting developing countries in fighting tax evasion and illicit capital flows, promoting a new positive approach to migration and extending the concept of universal health coverage.** A Progressive agenda is however not only about aid. It is also about fair trade, promoting decent work and just and safe use of raw materials. Only when people are able to make a living and nature is respected, growth can be sustainable.

