

Common appeal to European leaders by European Civil Society Organisations and Trade Unions

24 February, 2017

The Europe we want: Just, Sustainable, Democratic and Inclusive

As we mark the 60th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, we have a momentous opportunity to take stock of how far Europe has come – and how far we still have to go in order to offer a sustainable and prosperous future to everyone in Europe. It is an opportunity that we call on you, the leaders of Europe, to seize with both hands. **We call on you to show leadership, vision and courage to set Europe on the path to a sustainable future which realises the rights of all people and respects planetary boundaries.**

We must not fail to appreciate how far Europe has come since 1957, when we were a handful of nations determined to emerge from the ashes of World War II and to move towards a peaceful and united common future. Today, the European Union is the largest and most successful peace initiative of our time, a place where Europeans find richness in cultural differences and strength in common values and aspirations, enjoying greater stability, safety and prosperity than in many other places in the world.

But we cannot afford to be complacent: much still needs to be done to construct a sustainable world for current and future generations. While we have seen much progress, the promise of those early days has still not been fully achieved and **we have entered an era in which the values at the very heart of Europe - democracy and participation, equality and social justice, solidarity and sustainability, respect for the rule of law and human rights - are being undermined.** Citizens are questioning the *raison d'être* of the European Union, the legitimacy of governments and mainstream politics, and the ability of existing governance structures to respond to society's most pressing challenges. As a result, trust in public institutions is in decline.

In these uncertain times, European citizens seek a stronger focus on those core 'European values', not a reduced one. They seek economic, social and environmental well-being. Economic well-being in the form of prosperity for all and the redistribution of wealth. Social well-being in the provision of quality, affordable services for all and a reinforcing of the social fabric which binds us together. Environmental well-being residing in a healthy natural environment that sustains all life on Earth and protects our clean water and air.

We therefore call on you, leaders of Europe, to move away from an economic model which has widened inequalities and rather to invest in a 'social market economy' that works for the benefit of all people. With poverty and social exclusion at unacceptably high levels, we must return to more inclusive economic policies which ensure that Europe's prosperity is shared, without harming the planet.

We call on you to uphold our core values and invest in employment and education based on critical thinking in order to defend our open, democratic societies and to address the sense of insecurity felt by many. We call on you, leaders of Europe, to ensure that gender equality, human rights, freedom of religion, democracy and the rule of law are fully implemented and upheld, both at EU and national level. We want to see a more hospitable Europe where everyone's contribution is welcome and migration is recognised as a boon to society, not a drain.

Europe also needs to play its part in tackling global challenges. Climate change in particular is an existential risk to our world and it must be tackled not only for environmental reasons, but also to prevent the escalation of conflict, hunger, and forced migration.

Building on our call for '*A New Europe for People, Planet and Prosperity for All*' (September 2016), we are seizing the opportunity of the 60th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome to reaffirm our belief in European integration and to offer concrete proposals for the EU Heads of State and Government as they consider the future of Europe.

United we call for:

- A Europe that promotes and protects the civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights of everyone and supports those beyond its borders to realise their rights;
- The delivery of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, by putting the Sustainable Development Goals and the principles that underpin it at the core of EU and national policy-making;
- The full implementation of the Paris Agreement by accelerating the just transition to clean and affordable renewable energy as well as enhancing energy efficiency in order to keep global warming well below 2°C and pursuing efforts to keep it to 1.5°C;
- A strengthening of our representative and participatory democracy, with distinct space for people's participation beyond elections, enabling a diverse civil society to flourish;
- A strengthening of education as a public responsibility that offers lifelong learning for all in order to develop active citizenship, critical thinking, social inclusion and an awareness of sustainable development and human rights;
- A just transition for workers and industrial regions from the current economic model to a modern, vibrant, green and socially just economy in which our human and natural capital is cherished;
- A European Social Model that provides full protection to all workers, all consumers and all people living in the EU; one that reverses the wealth gap and reduces poverty and social exclusion;
- A European Union with a strong social rights pillar, which ensures quality employment and fair pay, and addresses inequalities between women and men, discrimination against children and youth or based on race, sexual orientation, gender identity, socio-economic status, age, disability, minority or other status.

In the face of a world that is changing faster than ever before, European unity and solidarity are just as important now as they were 60 years ago. **Solidarity brought us together and solidarity is the only way forward. None of the current challenges can be solved by one nation or one group of people alone.**

However, there is an urgent need for the European Union and its institutions to reconnect with the realities, dreams and hopes of its citizens if the long-term relevance and survival of our Union are to be secured. Now is the time to rethink the direction in which we are travelling, build on our achievements and lay the foundations for the next 60 years of European integration.

We expect you, as the leaders of Europe, to do just that: to have the courage and the vision to lead the transition to a just, sustainable, democratic and inclusive Europe. **We expect you to listen to the people of Europe and to use the occasion of the Rome Summit to make a strong, joint commitment to a better, more sustainable future.**

This common statement was drafted on the initiative of WWF, ETUC, CONCORD, European Movement, European Women's Lobby and European Youth Forum.