

International Socialist Organization



I. Global Change and Future Prospects

1. The idea of Socialism has caught the imagination of people across the world, promoted successful political movements, decisively improved the lives of working men and women, and contributed to shaping the 20th century.

However, justified satisfaction about the realisation of many of our goals should not prevent us from clearly recognising present dangers and problems. We are aware that essential tasks still lie ahead which we can master only through common action, since human survival increasingly depends upon the joint efforts of people around the world.

****2.** Current economic, technological, political and social changes reflect a profound transformation of our world.****** The fundamental issue we now face is not whether there will be change in future years, but rather who is going to control it and how. The socialist answer is unequivocal. It is the people of the world who should exercise control by means of a more advanced democracy in all aspects of life: political, social, and economic. Political democracy, for socialists, is the necessary framework and precondition for other rights and liberties..****3.** All the peoples of the world should be involved in the process of transforming our societies and promoting new hope for humankind. The Socialist International calls on all men and women committed to peace and progress to work together in order to translate this hope into reality.

4. The challenge of global change opens up enormous possibilities:

I. Global Change and Future Prospects (cont)

- The internationalisation of the economy and wide-spread access to information and new technologies can, if brought under democratic control, provide a basis for a world society better suited to cooperation. It is obvious that a world family is no longer a utopian dream, but, increasingly, a practical necessity.

- The technological revolution can and should be used to preserve the environment, create new employment and provide the means to liberate people from routine work rather than ruthlessly impose unwanted idleness.

- On the basis of suitable and humane democratic structures, freedom, equality, security and prosperity can be achieved within the framework of a democratic world society.

****5.** However, many current trends also give rise to unprecedented threats:=-

- Proliferation of the technologies of destruction promote a precarious balance of terror where there are inadequate guarantees for the security of humankind.

- The physical conditions for life on the planet are threatened by an uncontrolled urban and industrial expansion, the degradation of the biosphere, and the irrational exploitation of vital resources.

- Hunger, famine and death threaten whole regions and communities in the South, even though the world has enough natural and technical resources to feed itself.

6. This transformation of social and economic structures is at least as dramatic and far-reaching as the transition from laissez-faire to the corporate capitalism and colonialism of pre-World War I days. The social cost of these transformations - unemployment, regional decline, destruction of communities - has affected not only the very poor but also working people in general.

7. The rapid process of internationalisation and interdependence in the world economy has given rise to contradictions within existing political, social and national institutions. This growing gap between an international economy and inadequate international political structures has been a contributory factor to the poverty and underdevelopment of the South, as well as to mass unemployment and new forms of poverty in many areas of the North.

I. Global Change and Future Prospects (cont)

8. Real progress has been made since World War II in vital areas such as decolonisation, the growth of the Welfare State and, more recently, disarmament, where the first hopeful steps have been taken. However, age-old injustices remain. Human rights are still violated, racial and sex discrimination are rife, and individual opportunities in life are still determined by the region and class in which people are born.

9. Faced with such crucial issues, the Socialist International reaffirms its fundamental beliefs. It is committed, as ever, to the democratisation on a global scale of economic, social and political power structures. The same principles and political commitments which socialism has always held have to be attained in a world that has changed radically since the Frankfurt Declaration of 1951.

10. The Socialist International was founded a hundred years ago in order to coordinate the worldwide struggle of democratic socialist movements for social justice, human dignity and democracy. It brought together parties and organisations from different traditions which shared a common goal: democratic socialism. Throughout their history, socialist, social democratic and labour parties have stood for the same values and principles.

11. Today the Socialist International combines its traditional struggle for freedom, justice and solidarity with a deep commitment to peace, the protection of the environment, and the development of the South. All these issues require common answers. To this end, the Socialist International seeks the support of all those who share its values and commitment.

II. Principles: Freedom, Justice and Solidarity

12. Democratic socialism is an international movement for freedom, social justice and solidarity. Its goal is to achieve a peaceful world where these basic values can be enhanced and where each individual can live a meaningful life with the full development of his or her personality and talents and with the guarantee of human and civil rights in a democratic framework of society.

II. Principles: Freedom, Justice and Solidarity (cont)

13. Freedom is the product of both individual and cooperative efforts - the two aspects are parts of a single process. Each person has the right to be free of political coercion and also to the greatest chance to act in pursuit of individual goals and to fulfil personal potential. But that is only possible if humanity as a whole succeeds in its long-standing struggle to master its history and to ensure that no person, class, sex, religion or race becomes the servant of another.

14. Justice and Equality. Justice means the end of all discrimination against individuals, and the equality of rights and opportunities. It demands compensation for physical, mental and social inequalities, and freedom from dependence on either the owners of the means of production or the holders of political power.

-Equality is the expression of the equal value of all human beings and the precondition for the free development of the human personality. Basic economic, social and cultural equality is essential for individual diversity and social progress.

- Freedom and equality are not contradictory. Equality is the condition for the development of individual personality. Equality and personal freedom are indivisible.

15. Solidarity is all-encompassing and global. It is the practical expression of common humanity and of the sense of compassion with the victims of injustice. Solidarity is rightly stressed and celebrated by all major humanist traditions. In the present era of unprecedented interdependence between individuals and nations, solidarity gains an enhanced significance since it is imperative for human survival.

16. Democratic socialists attach equal importance to these fundamental principles. They are interdependent. Each is a prerequisite of the other. As opposed to this position, Liberals and Conservatives have placed the main emphasis on individual liberty at the expense of justice and solidarity while Communists have claimed to achieve equality and solidarity, but at the expense of freedom.



Democracy and Human Rights

17. The idea of democracy is based on the principles of freedom and equality. Therefore, equal rights for men and women - not only in theory, but also in practice, at work, in the family and in all areas of social life - are part of the socialist concept of society.

18. Democratic socialists strive to achieve equal rights for all races, ethnic groups, nations and denominations. These rights are seriously in question in many regions of the world today.

****19.** Forms of democracy of course may vary.****** However, it is only possible to speak of democracy if people have a free choice between various political alternatives in the framework of free elections; if there is a possibility for a change of government by peaceful means based on the free will of the people; if individual and minority rights are guaranteed; and, if there is an independent judicial system based on the rule of law impartially applied to all citizens. Political democracy is an indispensable element of a socialist society.

Democratic socialism is a continuing process of social and economic democratisation and of increasing social justice..**20. Individual rights are fundamental to the values of socialism.** Democracy and human rights are also the substance of popular power, and the indispensable mechanism whereby people can control the economic structures which have so long dominated them. Without democracy, social policies cannot disguise the dictatorial character of a government.

21. There can be no doubt that different cultures will develop their own institutional forms of democracy. But whatever form democracy assumes - nationally or internationally - it must provide full rights for individuals and for organised minority opinions. For socialists, democracy is of its very nature pluralist, and this pluralism provides the best guarantee of its vitality and creativity.

22. Freedom from arbitrary and dictatorial government is essential. It constitutes the precondition whereby peoples and societies can create a new and better world of peace and international cooperation - a world in which political, economic and social destinies will be democratically determined.

The Nature of Socialism

23. Democratic socialists have arrived at the definition of these values in many different ways. They originate in the labour movement, popular liberation movements, cultural traditions of mutual assistance, and communal solidarity in many parts of the world. They have also gained from the various humanist traditions of the world.

- But although there are differences in their cultures and ideologies, all socialists are united in their vision of a peaceful and democratic world society combining freedom, justice and solidarity.

****24.** The national struggles for democratic socialism in the years to come will show differences in policy and divergences on legislative provisions.****** These will reflect different histories and the pluralism of varied societies. Socialists do not claim to possess the blueprint for some final and fixed society which cannot be changed, reformed or further developed. In a movement committed to democratic self-determination there will always be room for creativity since each people and every generation must set its own goals..**25. In addition to the principles which guide all democratic socialists, there is a clear consensus among socialists on fundamental values.**

Despite all diversity, it is common ground that democracy and human rights are not simply political means to socialist ends but the very substance of those ends - a democratic economy and society.

****26.** Individual freedom and basic rights in society are the preconditions of human dignity for all.****** These rights cannot replace one another, nor can they be played off against each other. Socialists protect the inalienable right to life and to physical safety, to freedom of belief and free expression of opinion, to freedom of association and to protection from torture and degradation. Socialists are committed to achieve freedom from hunger and want, genuine social security, and the right to work..



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The Nature of Socialism (cont)

27. Democratic socialism also means cultural democracy. There must be equal rights and opportunities for the different cultures within each society as well as equal access for everyone to the national and global cultural heritage.

III. Peace: Peace - A Basic Value

28. Peace is the precondition of all our hopes. It is a basic value of common interest to all political systems and necessary for human society. War destroys human life and the basis for social development. A nuclear holocaust could spell the end of human life as we know it.

29. A lasting peace cannot be guaranteed through nuclear deterrence nor through an arms race with conventional forces. Therefore disarmament and new models of common security are imperative.

30. What is now essential is the achievement, not merely of military stability at the lowest possible level of defensive weapon systems, but also a climate of mutual political confidence. This can be developed through cooperation on projects for our common future and a new emphasis on peaceful competition between societies with different political, economic and social structures.

31. Peace is more than the absence of war. It cannot be based on fear or on ephemeral goodwill between the Superpowers. The fundamental economic and social causes of international conflict must be abolished by the achievement of global justice and by the creation of new institutions for the peaceful resolution of conflicts around the world.

****32.** The establishment of a New International Economic and Political Order is an essential contribution to peace.****** This should involve respect for national sovereignty and the right to national self-government, negotiated settlement of conflict, and suspension of arms supplies to the parties in conflict. There must be both global and regional systems for cooperation and peaceful conflict resolution in all parts of the world. These could be brought about through the action of the UN, complementing agreements between the Superpowers..**33. Peace is equally a necessity within nations.** Violent ways of handling conflicts destroy opportunities for development and human rights. Education for peace and disarmament must be intensified.

****34.**

III. Peace: Peace - A Basic Value (cont)

The militarisation of relations between nations of the South has become a serious threat to the future of humanity, as are the tensions between East and West.****** In some cases the major powers, with their tendency to globalise conflict, have engaged in proxy struggles in countries of the South. In others, the arms merchants of both East and West have contributed to raising the level of violence in the South as they sought political advantage or profit. It is undeniable that every war in the past four decades has been fought in those regions of the world. Social, economic and other causes of conflict in the South must be eliminated..