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Speech by INGVAR CARLSSON

Swedish Social Democratic Party

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Statement by Ingvar Carlsson,
Chairman of the Swedish Social
Democratic Party, at the Congress
of the Socialist International.

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Social Democracy in a Changing World

In this time of new openings and challenges it is of historical significance that the Socialist International should meet in Berlin.

The Berlin wall was the essence of the Cold War.

With the transformation of East-West relations we now have the possibility to create a new system of global security and governance.

And in Europe, the very heart of these historic events, we at last have the possibility to create an open and integrated continent.

Even in view of the conflicts we today meet in so many human spheres, we must see clearly that we have a unique opportunity to build a world of democracy and solidarity.

It is also most appropriate that we should be meeting here, in the city which more than any other is the city of Willy

Brandt. As the originator of European Ostpolitik and one of the most important creators of the global North-South dialogue, Willy Brandt personally had the vision that helped create the present opportunities. It is such foresighted vision that must guide us today.

And I see it as significant that we are meeting here in Germany, a country to which we owe so much of the origins of the political movement of Social Democracy. Germany is today a country of freedom and openness, a central partner in international cooperation for reason and humanism. German Social Democracy led the way in shaping Germany this way. And in the Socialist International we continue to look to German Social Democracy for inspiration and leadership.

The Socialist International can look back upon a century of struggle, a long period with both progress and defeat. But even in times of difficulty and even in wide circles outside of our parties Social Democrats have been viewed as carriers of the best social aspirations, as creative and realistic reformers of our societies. That has given us great legitimacy and made us the leading political force in many countries. We can look back at a long history and be proud of our achievements.

Today we face new challenges.

It has, however, been said that while the 20th century was the century of the Social Democrats, the next century will

belong to other political forces. This gives us implicit recognition for what we have achieved, but it questions our ability to lead the way and find the answers to the new challenges.

I know this is wrong. I believe, to the contrary, that it is only a political movement that is centered around the visions and values of Social Democracy that can bring out the political strength to respond to the challenges of the coming century.

For the coming years I see us leading the way to meet three challenges.

Firstly, we must strengthen the culture of democracy.

We Social Democrats can take pride in having been at the forefront when democracy made its breakthrough in country after country during this century. We now face the task, not only of bringing democracy to those countries where human rights are still trampled upon, but of strengthening and deepening democracy, both where it has been newly gained or regained, as in the new democracies in Latin America, in Central and Eastern Europe and in other places around the world, but in the old democracies of the West, as well.

People must not lose their sense of being empowered. We have seen in Europe, before, how the enemies of democracy can use the fears and insecurity of people for their purposes.

Democracy must be constantly defended.

We must again show that political choice matters, that politics has strength. We must show that it has meaning to take a stand and get organised. A democratic culture consists of much more than periodic elections.

If we do not move forward with the challenges of our time, both at home and internationally, we will move backwards. We will risk losing what we have gained.

Secondly, then, we must be concrete and provide new alternatives - to revitalise the economy, to reform the social systems and to resolve the environmental threats.

The 1980s were in many ways the decade of the neo-liberals. According to this ideology, more markets and less politics was the answer to all problems, regardless of what they were. Politics was said to be an obstacle to economic development and a threat against the freedom of the individual.

However, in countries where the neo-liberal policies have had a strong influence, that policy has not led to higher economic growth or better social standards. Instead, the rich have become richer and the poor have become poorer.

In Western Europe today 16-17 million people are without work. Many are stuck in a state of unemployment from which they will never rise.

At the same time the financial heroes of the 1980s are leaving behind them money markets in which people have little reason to feel confidence.

It's time we took the leadership in revitalising the market economies. We must focus on the real objectives: raising productivity, achieving a just income distribution, and securing full employment.

It must be recognised that it is rational from an economic viewpoint to support education, new technology, and infrastructure, to have broad, just, and also individually empowering social safety systems, and to make environmental consciousness a much stronger anchor in our lives.

This will require a lot of new thinking. We cannot expect anybody else to do it for us. It will be the task for us Social Democrats to show the way.

That this is the right direction was confirmed by a recent study made by the United Nations. It criticises the exaggerated reliance on the market which marked the 1980s. It describes how governments in fact have worsened their situation by cutting down on the public sphere. This in turn has limited world economic growth.

The study calls not for more market, but for more good politics. I see that as a good sign. The problems we face

demand more not less common solutions. Solidarity is not an obstacle, but a prerequisite for development and democracy,

This brings me to the third challenge for which I believe that the Social Democratic movement is needed in the coming years: radically strengthening international cooperation.

We live in a difficult time of transition, of political uncertainty.

On the one hand, progress like that made at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro or in the CSCE process in Europe show that nations have been able to make very important headway.

On the other hand, the human tragedies in Somalia and the former Yugoslavia show that we do not have the collective systems to prevent such disasters.

In Europe we see how nations are seeking new forms of cooperation. And we see how difficult it is to find and agree on the correct forms. The events in Rostock and elsewhere have also reminded us of the dark history of intolerance that we carry with us.

So, it is clear that the abilities of nations to take common responsibility will be put to the test.

After the end of the Cold War, a new world order will take shape. Either we allow that order to be determined by the

vagaries of power or we, the nations and peoples of the world, shape it collectively and consciously to meet the human needs.

Only on such a foundation of solidarity will man survive and realise his full potentials. Man - in this concept's full philosophical meaning - must be the measure of the new world order.

Such a world order can only be built on a radically new understanding of the concepts of security and sovereignty.

Security can no longer be understood only in relation to defense policy. The security of nations will in the future to an ever decreasing degree be guaranteed by force. Only a security order which is also a cooperation order is sustainable.

Sovereignty can no longer be interpreted simply as national independence. Only through far-reaching integration will we be able to exercise our sovereignty and provide our national identities with a secure home.

Thus, international law will need to be developed to more distinctly define the rights and obligations of nations.

We must, in short, develop a new system for global security and governance.

The United Nations, of course, stands at the centre. The UN Charter, possibly mankind's most important document ever, gives us a solid ground.

Just as the United Nations was created by visionary leaders at the end of the Second World War in 1945, we must now, at the end of the Cold War, also be visionary and ready to radically strengthen that and other global and regional organisations.

I hope to contribute to this process through the work of an independent commission, that I will chair together with the former Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, Sir Shridath Ramphal. This commission on global cooperation and governance follows on other commissions which were led by Willy Brandt, by the late Olof Palme, by Gro Harlem Brundtland, and by Julius Nyerere. The work of these commissions have had great impact in shaping our ideas and the course of international cooperation.

We want in this process to build on broadest possible consensus. But I will venture to say at this meeting that it is not by chance that many of the most prominent internationalists of this world also belong to our political movement.

And this is how I think we should work, whether it is with the objective of

- strengthening the culture of democracy,

- developing new, concrete alternatives in the economic, social and environmental spheres, or
- building a new system of global security and governance.

To meet these new challenges, that I have talked about, we must work closely with other political forces who share our visions and values. We must be open to cooperation with new political movements in many parts of the world, who in reality are close to us but who may not always use the same political language.

It is only by building on the sense of common responsibility that we can create a world of democracy and solidarity.

This is a challenge for the Socialist International.

I am convinced that in the years to come the Social Democratic movement will gain in importance, in its role of providing visionary and reliable political leadership in an ever more complex world.