

18th November 2009

Peace Process in the Basque Country

Today, the Friendship Group « Towards a peace process in the Basque Country » welcomes very warmly what we consider to be a step of great importance in order to achieve a peaceful scenario in the Basque Country.

Last Saturday, 14th of November, the Abertzale Left¹ presented what they called “*A first step for the Democratic Process: principles and will of the Abertzale Left*”. In this document the Abertzale Left commits itself to a “*democratic process*” that “*must be developed in a complete absence of violence and without interference, by the use of exclusively political and democratic means*”. It also considers that “*this process has to be conducted in accordance with the Mitchell principles*”².

We believe this decision facilitates a positive scenario that could end in a peace process, and we ask all parties involved in the conflict to react responsibly and to engage in a process that will lead to peace talks.

We as a friendship group that is working "towards a peace process in the Basque Country" would like to express our willingness to continue working in favour of the resolution of the Basque conflict.

We share the idea that the only solution that is valid for everyone is one that will be drawn up by a multilateral agreement and that is based on dialogue, peaceful and democratic means and entitles the Basques to decide upon their future freely.

Tomorrow heads of state of the EU are meeting in Brussels. We would like to ask the European Union and all its member states, as stated by the resolution adopted by the EU parliament in October 2006, to support and promote a peace process in the Basque Country. We hope that the upcoming Spanish presidency of the EU will be used in order to find a peaceful solution to this long-standing conflict.

We urge the release of Arnaldo Otegi and all those arrested for their political activities, including former MEP Karmelo Landa whose release has been demanded by the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, in order to assure their involvement in a peace process.

Bairbre de Brún MEP and Tatjana Ždanoka MEP, on behalf of the Friendship Group:
Towards a Peace Process in the Basque Country.

¹ The word Abertzale is associated with a particular way of understanding Basque nationalism as a progressive and internationalist movement which involves a wide range of organisations such as political parties, trade unions, cultural organisations, and significant parts of the women's, environmental and internationalist movements, who believe in the liberation of Basque Country.

² Named after US Senator George Mitchell, the Mitchell Principles were agreed by the Irish and British governments and the political parties involved in the Irish peace process. Among other things the principles commit participants to democratic and exclusively peaceful means of resolving political issues.