

LONDON HOSTS MOST REPRESENTATIVE EUROPEAN CONFERENCE TO DATE ON VENEZUELA



Over two hundred delegates from 12 European countries met at a conference in London hosted by the Venezuela Information Centre, Labour Friends of Venezuela, Le Monde Diplomatique and Memoires des Luttes, on Saturday 10 November to support democracy and social progress in Venezuela. Delegates included members of the European Parliament, national parliaments, mayors, trade union leaders and representatives of social movements from Belgium, Britain, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.

(Ken Livingstone, Mayor of London, left)

Full text of the statement issued at the London Conference is below.

"Support for Social Progress and Democracy in Venezuela"

We believe that the lives of millions of Venezuelans have been transformed by the progressive social and democratic policies of Hugo Chávez's government.

Extreme poverty has been halved, illiteracy nearly eliminated, participation in education has more than doubled and free basic health care extended to nearly 20 million people, who had no access before. Unemployment has fallen to an historic low.

(Miguel Angel Martinez, Vice President European Parliament, below)



The constitution introduced by President Chavez, approved by Venezuelans in a popular referendum, is one of the most democratic in the world and enshrines rights of previously excluded and minority groups. An emphasis on social inclusion has improved the position of women and Venezuela's black, mixed-race and indigenous majority.

Venezuela's government has directly promoted participatory democracy through community councils, urban land committees and other local bodies.

President Chavez' sweeping social, political and economic agenda, has been endorsed by Venezuelans in 11 democratic elections that have been consistently judged free and fair

by international observers. On 2 December the Venezuelan people will once again be called on to vote, on a series of reforms to the 1999 constitution proposed by President Chavez.

Venezuela is one of the few countries in the world where both the constitution, and any revisions to it, must be approved by a majority of citizens in a national referendum. We call on the international community to respect the outcome of the coming referendum and support the sovereign and democratic right of the Venezuelan people to self-determination.

(Giorgio Mele MP, Italy, below)



Participants at the London Conference Included:

Ken Livingstone, Mayor of London
Miguel Angel Martinez MEP, Vice-President, European Parliament
Francis Wurtz MEP, President, Confederal Group of the European

United Left-Nordic Green Left in the European Parliament
Sevim Dagdelen MP, Germany
Diane Abbott MP, Britain
Jeremy Corbyn MP, Britain

George Galloway MP, Britain
Giorgio Mele MP, Italy
Francesco Napoletano MP, Italy
Martina Anderson MLA, Ireland
Raymond McCartney MLA, Ireland
Francine Bavay, Vice-president, Région Ile de France, France.
Francois Auguste, Vice President, Region Rhone-Alpes, France
Spyridon Tzokas, Mayor of Kessariani, Athens
Raul Morodo, former Spanish ambassador to Venezuela
Walter Suter, former ambassador to Venezuela, Switzerland
Eva Bjorklund, Left Party, Sweden
Fran Perez, United Left, Spain
Fabio De Nardis, Rifondazione Comunista, Italy
Raquel Garrido, Pour La Republique Social, France
Paul-Emile Dupret, advisor in the European Parliament, Belgium
Roger Ferrari, National Secretary SNES-FSU, France
Keith Sonnett, Deputy General Secretary Unison
Francisco Braz, President STAL trade union, Portugal
Jose Oliveira, International Relations Officer, SNTCT trade union, Portugal
Adrian Kane, National Officer SIPTU, Ireland
Roland Sidler, Unia trade union, Switzerland,

Bernard Harbor, IMPACT trade union, Ireland,
Petteri Otajen, Toimihenkilöunioni trade union, Finland,
Joni McDougall, International Officer, GMB
Bruno Julliard, President UNEF, France
Gemma Tumelty, President National Union of Students, Britain
Pelle Rodin, Vice-President, National Union of Students, Sweden
Bernard Cassen, Le Monde Diplomatique, France
Richard Gott, author
Maurice Lemoine, author
Rod Stoneman, Executive Producer, 'Revolution Will Not Be Televised',
Andrés Vázquez de Sol, Journalist
Julia Buxton, Centre for International Co-operation and Security, University of Bradford
Carmen Pérez Carballo, Director, Club Internacional De Prensa, Xunta de Galicia
Angélica Carmenate Portilla, Delegacion De Cultura, Diputación Provincial de Granada
Dimitris Kalsonis, Executive, World Peace Council