

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

PRESS RELEASE

IN COLOMBIA WITH THE INGRID BETANCOURT SUPPORT COMMITTEE, FOR THE FREEDOM OF ALL HOSTAGES

Brussels 8/2/08

" In Colombia for the freedom of Ingrid Betancourt and all the hostages, so that their lives would not be forgotten and the mediation continues" - declared **Luisa Morgantini**, Vice President of the European Parliament, who will participate to the delegation organized by the Ingrid Betancourt Supporting Committee in Colombia, from 8th till 11th February, 2008.

"The objective of the mission is to continue the solidarity campaign towards the hundreds of kidnapped people still in the Colombian jungle and to strengthen the mobilisation of International public opinion in order to pressure on the Farc and on President Of Colombia Alvaro Uribe for negotiations that will led to their immediate freedom.

The announcement of the release of three hostages is a signal of hope also for the other kidnapped men and women and for their families. International mediation, EU and all European Governments' commitment in favour of the dialogue in Colombia must continue till there will be no hostage anymore" added Luisa Morgantini.

The delegation will be composed by four members of the Support Committee for Ingrid Betancourt, by the former President of the EP Nicole Fontaine (PPE) and by EP Vice President, Luisa Morgantini, who will bring a message by the EP President Hans-Gert Pottering supporting the release of Ingrid Betancourt, hostage held by the FARC since 23rd February 2002.

The programme of the delegation foresees meetings with the families of the kidnapped people, with former hostages released, such as Clara Rojas released on 11th January 2008.

There will be meetings with the Mayor of Bogotá, with Representatives of Colombian Institutions and Parliamentarians, in order to create a closer cooperation and to show a strong determination to act together for the release of all the hostages, but also with peace and human rights organisations in order to show a strong solidarity with the civil population of Colombia who is suffering and fighting the hostages' taking and at the same time is reclaiming peaceful solutions.

Support Committee for Ingrid Betancourt, Clara Rojas and all the hostages in Colombia
www.agirpouringrid.com

"THE SEEDS OF PEACE" AT THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: WHAT CAN EU DO TO SUPPORT CIVIL SOCIETY PEACEKEEPING?

Brussels 6th November 2007

"The role of civil society in peace is today more essential than ever and peacekeeping missions need all our support and protection. As Parliamentarians we should use all our political power to empower the experiences of the non-violent peace forces " declared Luisa Morgantini, Vice President of the European Parliament hosting a public hearing" The seeds of Peace", concerning Civil society peacekeeping, today at the European Parliament together with MEP Angelika Berer (Greens/Efa) and in collaboration with Nonviolent Peaceforce.

"The potential role that civilians can play in preventing and managing conflict is still largely underestimated and this is something which has to change. These – continued Luisa Morgantini- were the words pronounced in 1995 by Alexander Langer, politician, journalist, writer and President of the Greens/EFA Group, who first talked in the European Parliament about the necessity of using the involvement of civil society such as concrete instrument to stop the war and human rights' abuses".

"Today I dedicate this meeting to Alexander Langer and Daniel Amit, who both committed suicide, because they could not bear this world of war. Their lives were dedicated to raise awareness on non-violent actions and on the civil peace corps issue. Their commitment and their opposition against governmental policies of war must be the commitment of all of us, and we are here because we keep our hope and our action to manage conflict without wars.

The European Parliament, often through the help by many NGOs and civil society movements committed in peace, has done many remarkable resolutions in order to prevent conflicts and wars, such as for example the total ban on land mines: unfortunately now the problem on the ground still remains their implementation and often the lack of coherence in European Union's policies for peace and human rights.

That's why I am very glad of having organized this exchange of opinions concerning field experiences and European perspective for peace, especially through the support that EU and National Institution must provide to all the organization of civil society that are already acting in conflict areas.

For this, I am also pleased that European Commission and Council's representatives showed its interest on this issue through their participation at the hearing: the launching of the Instrument for Stability and its "Peacebuilding Partnership" by the European Commission should concretely and positively act on the financing of the non violent civilian peace corps.

People engaged for peace in conflict areas are fundamental for peace but they need a strong international protection and support".

EU NEEDS A STRONGER COMMITMENT AGAINST DEPLETED URANIUM WEAPONS

Brussels 6th November 2007,

"European Union should set an example for the International Community for a worldwide moratorium on Uranium weapons" urged by Luisa Morgantini, Vice-President of the European Parliament in a press conference organized today together with Els de Groen (Dutch MEP of the Green/EFA Group) on the occasion of the International Day of Action against Depleted Uranium Weapons.

A recent resolution passed at the UN First Committee in New York, urging -by an overwhelming majority (122 countries including Japan voted for)- UN members States to re-examine the health hazards provoked by using of uranium weapons that also causes widespread and long lasting radioactive contamination of the environment. "Even if it represents a very important step - added Luisa Morgantini - three countries inside the EU such as France, Netherlands and Czech Republic, voted against this resolution".

"It's urgent to raise the awareness on this issue inside the European Institutions -declared Luisa Morgantini- For this reason we hosted today at EP the ICBUW's (the International Coalition to Ban Uranium Weapons) launch of a global disinvestment campaign against investments by high street banks and investment companies around the world in the manufacturers of uranium weapons, presenting new findings concerning the policy around depleted uranium weapons".

"The use of uranium weapons has devastating consequences on human health and the environment. That's why we call for an immediate end to the use of uranium weapons and for the disclosure of all locations where uranium weapons have been used".

"These weapon systems are radiologically and chemically toxic. That's why, since 2001 the European Parliament has made repeated calls for a moratorium to be introduced on the use of uranium weapons, but the implementation of the ban is far to be accomplished in the European Union. All the European countries should follow the Belgian example, that in March 2007, became the first country in the world to ban uranium weapons and armour as well, invoking the following damning evidence of uranium's chemical toxicity: unfortunately till today at least 18 countries still possess these weapons, the use of which is contrary to existing humanitarian law".

"The Italian government also should immediately follow the Belgian example and ban the use of 'depleted' uranium weapons or any other industrially manufactured uranium, that already caused too many illnesses and medical problems, among the Italian soldiers who took part to the different military missions in Afghanistan, Lebanon, Iraq and Balkans. Furthermore it's

indecent that there is no clearness even about the records reporting the real numbers of dead and ill people because of the effects of the uranium weapons: the big discrepancy between the information provided by the Italian Defence Ministry and what declared by the Military Observatory, that denounced 161 deaths and 2536 illness due to uranium since 1996, is unacceptable. Now it is time for truth and commitment."

**Europe should not be blind anymore to the challenge of hunger.
Europe should face it and act now.**

On the occasion of World Food Day 2007 "The Human Right to Food"

Brussels, 15th October 2007

"The right to food has to be a priority: agriculture, development cooperation and consumer protection policies in Europe must be oriented to completely defeat the unacceptable hunger and malnutrition in a world of abundance and inequality" declared Luisa Morgantini, Vice President of the European Parliament who today hosted the launch of the Campaign "Face It – Act Now!", together with **Jean Ziegler**, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, and **Flavio Valente**, Secretary General of FIAN, the international organisation for the Right to Food.

"Tomorrow 16th October is the World Food Day dedicated to "the human right to food" but every day 850 million children, women and men still continue to go to bed hungry. Millions die every year because of hunger and malnutrition. This is unacceptable: access to food is a human right recognised by the Universal Declaration on Human Rights of the United Nations and this fundamental right must be respected.

That's why the European Union cannot remain blind to the challenge of hunger: it's our duty to ensure the widest access to resources such as land, water or seeds and prevent violations of the right to food.

It is the responsibility of all governments of developed countries to shun policies that can cause hunger in less developed countries and create "hunger refugees" - people fleeing from hunger and severe violations of their right to food.

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FIAN International is the first international organisation to campaign for the realisation of the right to adequate food. FIAN International is a grass-roots oriented non-for profit organisation that has consultative status with the United Nations. FIAN's vision is a world free from hunger, in which every person enjoys human rights in dignity, in particular the right to adequate food.

**EPA, poor people are the priority: development-oriented rules in WTO,
support to local economies and attention to the real needs of ACP
countries**

Strasbourg, 27 th September

Luisa Morgantini, Vice President of the European Parliament and rapporteur of the Report on the development impact of Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs), in occasion of the fourth anniversary of the beginning of the negotiations, today 27th September, and in solidarity with the demonstration in all Europe criticizing the actual state of EPA's, expresses her "deep

concern about the crucial moment for the EPAs and their potential devastating impact on African countries and economies.

For this reason many Members of the European Parliament (see the list below) addressed letter to the Portuguese new EU Presidency, showing their preoccupation about the implementation of the overall objective of combating poverty and improving the living conditions of millions of poor people in the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries.

Many organisations of the European and African civil society and some ACP governments express the same concern, and we must take them into the highest consideration.

I think that it is essential to guarantee transparent and inclusive debates on this issue, in which a fundamental role must be played by independent experts, national parliaments, farmers organisations, trade unions, industries representatives and all the interested parties of civil societies directly involved.

In particular, the MEPs call on the EU to stop pressing ACP countries to sign commercial agreements on which impact there are still many uncertainties and concerns, as emphasised both by the European Parliament and the Joint Parliamentary Assembly. This policy may represent a wrong and arbitrary blackmail: the deadline of 31st December for the closure of the negotiations should be postponed and alternative solutions must be searched .

In addition, it's a nonsense to force ACP countries to open unconditionally their markets to the European competitiveness, often provoking remarkable damages to the sustainability of local economies, due to the huge difference of economic development and trade capacities. The consequences of this indiscriminate liberalization will deteriorate and not solve the ongoing poverty.

The only way to act for a just and sustainable economy in the world is starting by the WTO rules, that cannot never prevail on the overall objective of wellbeing for all but have to be development-oriented: that's what European Commission it's called to claim and the first step to concretely fight the world poverty".

MEP's signatories of the letter:

Luisa MORGANTINI, MEP- Vice President of the European Parliament

Vittorio AGNOLETTI, MEP Kader ARIF, MEP Alessandro BATTILOCCHIO, MEP Marie-Arlette CARLOTTI, MEP Harlem DESIR, MEP Saïd EL KHADRAOUI, MEP Ana GOMES, MEP Alain HUTCHINSON, MEP Caroline LUCAS, MEP Helmut MARKOV, MEP Beatrice PATRIE, MEP Raül ROMEVA, MEP Feleknas UCA, MEP Anne VAN LANCKER, MEP Francis WURTZ, MEP Gabriele ZIMMER, MEP

STOP TO THE NUCLEAR WEAPONS:

THE WORLD SHOULD LISTEN TO PUGWASH'S WORDS ABOUT DISARMEMENT AND PEACE

Strasbourg, 12th July 2007

"The past already showed us the devastation provoked by nuclear weapons, the present is telling us that the dangers are still present every time arsenals get refilled, and the weapons race and the spatial shield are in agenda. On the other side, from the Conference of Pugwash, Canada, where scientists and politicians coming from all over the world met to discuss the nuclear disarmament, a different message comes out: the ban of the nuclear weapons is a responsibility towards mankind" affirmed Luisa Morgantini, Vice President of the European Parliament, remarking the fiftieth anniversary of the Conference of Pugwash, a Canadian city where in July (5th-8th) a group of international scientists met calling on the Governments of the world to completely banish the nuclear weapons.

"Each minute of each day more than twenty-six thousand nuclear weapons are ready to provoke destruction and death, if they were triggered. In Europe, in particular in NATO bases, according to the Natural Resources Defence Council there are even 480 nuclear nukes stocked by the American forces in the European Territory.

On 10th July, a news agency claimed that 130 nukes, the biggest quota in EU, stocked in the base of Ramstein, Germany, were secretly removed by the German Government and transferred to the US in 2005, but at the moment at least other 20 nuclear weapons still remain in other bases in Germany, and also an uncertain number in Great Britain, Belgium, Turkey and in the Netherlands.

In Italy, according to an inquiry conducted by Rainews 24, around 50 atomic bombs are stocked in the base of Aviano and 40 more in base of Ghedi, near Brescia.

What are the European Governments doing, and in particular the Italian Government, to accomplish their main role, i.e. ensuring the security and guaranteeing the protection of human rights for their own citizens?

How is it possible that they do not recognize the risks that these nuclear weapons, usually placed close to villages and towns, represent for the civil population?

We have to learn from the example of the scientists of Pugwash, Nobel Peace Prize in 1995, that since 50 years have been committed to this cause. We must improve at each level our efforts in fighting against nuclear weapons, as also Mikhail Gorbachev, former Russian President and Nobel Peace Prize in 1990, reminded us in a message addressed to Pugwash.

The European Union and EU Governments should claim a political agreement within the framework of the NATO in order to achieve a complete removal of all nuclear weapons from European Territory. It should be also ensured full political support in both the Institutions and in civil and social movements, so that a Treaty could be reached. This Treaty should control trade and production of nuclear and no-nuclear arms, and completely ban uranium weapons and landmines, re-allocating the resources, till now used for death purposes, towards a real development and welfare of citizens, for the benefit of peace and security for all.

Unfortunately, it seems that the world goes towards destruction and the news alert: there's a will to create more "war shields" also in European skies"

IMMIGRATION: EU MUST INTERVENE TO EMBANK BRAIN DRAIN AND BRAIN WASTE

Brussels , 28th June 2007

"The right of free movement is an inalienable human right and it should be guaranteed for all the millions of immigrants escaping from wars, poverty, hunger, illness; on the contrary too many times they die as clandestine, or they are victims of social exclusion and social prejudices, with no job, no home, no rights. Europe must intervene to embank the "brain drain" and the "brain waste" -declared Luisa Morgantini, Vice President the European Parliament, in occasion of this morning vote on the "Report on Skilled Migration and its effect on national development", co-rapporteurs MEP Morgantini and Jamaican MP Sharon Webster, both members of the EU-ACP joint Parliamentary Assembly.

"The report approved today by the Plenary of EU-ACP joint Parliamentary Assembly is an important signal that moves in the direction of a more correct approach towards immigration, considering the development of the countries of origin as a fundamental part of the migration policies.

However, contradictions still remain, for instance when a predilection is accorded to high qualified migrants

-through the green cards, passports already mentioned by the European Commission in its Action Plan on migration policies, providing incentives to fluxes of skilled migration- or each time that a qualified immigrant, even graduated, can't find a qualified job, appropriated to his competences, creating in this way a "brain waste".

Furthermore, facilitating skilled migrations represents a double-cut arm, because of the risk of the so-called "brain drain": only 50 doctors over 600, who have studied in Zambia since its independence, still work in that country; there are more doctors from Malawi in Manchester than in Malawi and over 80% of physicians, nurses, therapists graduated in the Universities of Zimbabwe moved abroad to work.

For these reasons, reinforcing the urgency of a Code of Conduct for ethical recruitment of health workers

and reiterating our support for the '20/20' objective- 20% of public aid from the North and 20% of the national budgets of the South allocated to basic social services (health and education)- it's necessary; but it's also urgent to reinforce "circular migration", that –through more flexible visas and through longer and more flexible employment contracts- facilitates the entry and readmission, even temporary, of skilled migrants, allowing them to be part of the development of their countries of origin, applying the expertise in different projects in their countries, also through an easier access to financial incentives needed for the creation of small enterprises.

It's a scandal that immigrants loose about 20% of their savings in costs for the transfer of remittances, the second most important resource for developing Countries, not having access to financial exemptions nor to new technologies that could avoid this waste of resources.

Considering that freedom of moving represents a right for all, we should automatically passing over this disparity of treatment towards the more qualified immigrants, to the detriment of who is only guilty not to have access to an appropriate education or to escape from war and humanitarian disasters.

Unfortunately, too many times European policies towards immigration are exclusively linked with the guarantee of a presumed security for their citizens, instead of contributing actively to eradicate poverty, first of all through the respect of commitments taken to accomplish the Millennium Development Goals.

The potential benefits of this change of course in immigration policies are larger than the profits coming from a freer international trade.

Assistance and development, instead of racism and closure, must be the European priorities towards immigration: immigrants, the new damned of the world, represent a resource for us and for their countries of origin.

The effects of the current approach to migrations, that not considers all these elements, don't represent a solution for the poverty in Developing Countries but are destroying the dream of a world where everybody could say "I want to travel, not to emigrate".

STOP THE WEAPONS RACE: ARMS TRADE TREATY URGENT

Brussels, 21th June 2007,

The death market is not facing a crisis. I am completely against the arms race of recent years, the violation of the proliferation Treaties and the media bombardment of irrational and frightening ideas, such as the one of a space shield, which, instead of bringing security, would lead to a more dangerous, unmanageable and crazy world", declared Luisa Morgantini, Vice President of the European Parliament. She added: "It is an historical contradiction that the 5 countries to have a permanent seat in the UN Security Council and, as such, are responsible for peacekeeping in the world, are also the biggest producers of arms and, therefore, of war".

"With this in mind, the European Parliament made an effort to provide political support to the Arms Trade Treaty, through the resolution put forward by Raul Romeva i Rueda MEP.

It imposes legal limits to the arms trade, through control mechanisms and equal legal and ethical rules for all countries, thereby avoiding double standards".

According to SIPRI,(peace research institute based in Stockholm), in 2006 world military expenditure rose to 1,204 billion dollars, 3,5% more than the previous year. Nevertheless , the news from the international community is not exclusively negative: on 6 December 2006 the UN General Assembly approved Resolution 61/89, asking the Secretary General to verify the governments' opinions on feasibility, competences and measures on Arms Trade.

"As Europeans - Morgantini said - we must listen to this voice of peace coming from three quarters of the world and sustain continuously and coherently an

agreement involving NGOs and civil society and go on struggling in order to achieve a total ban on nuclear weapons, landmines, cluster bombs and arms containing depleted uranium.

I find it shameful - Morgantini added - that the same EU Member States play the biggest role in arms exports, reaching the record figure of 10.5 billion dollars, equivalent to 39,2% of all international transactions and 20% of the world trade in the sector.

It is not acceptable that the United States, ranked number one in terms of military budgets (538.7 billion dollars) represents 46% of all global military expenditure - figures understandable only in the light of the military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq - and is the only member country of the United Nations that voted against the Treaty".

The EU should set a good example and try to reach the same consensus achieved on the occasion of the moratorium against the death penalty, with the Italian government at the forefront.

On the contrary, Italy - again according to SIPRI - has a military budget that has increased by 37% in 10 years (29.9 billion dollars) is ranked in eighth position for military expenditure and stands out for its negative record in surpassing, for the first time in 1985, the 800 million dollar mark in arms exports.

These data are unacceptable, especially considering that the Italian Government does not do much for poor countries (being quite a distance from delivering the 0,7% of its GNP to development cooperation; or the 280 million euro towards the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

Three quarters of the countries in the world, among them many countries that have recently been or are still involved in conflicts, have voted in favour of this resolution, launching an important message, a signal of the desperate need to channel the high amount of money wasted in the arms trade and used for spreading devastation and death towards activities aimed at a building a real sustainable development", concluded Luisa Morgantini.

International Day of the African Childhood:

The lack of education for African Youth is the open wound of humanity

Brussels, 15 June

"The lack of education for African Youth is the open wound of humanity and the absence of a true political will towards Africa by the International Community and many African Governments are the main obstacles for the achievement of the Second Millennium Goal" said Luisa Morgantini, Vice President of the European Parliament, during an event organised on 14 June, in occasion of the International Day of the African Childhood (16 June), with the participation of more than 10 African Embassies, several NGOs, artists such the Senegalese musician Baaba Maal, PNUD Ambassador.

"Nearly 70 million young Africans do not have access to a basic education, including 38 million children aged between 6 and 12 years and more than 30 million illiterate young people between 15 and 24 years. To these figures, it is necessary to add the "forgotten" children: child soldiers, slaves, street-children, orphans or servants who have neither a family nor a civil status. They represent about half the number of illiterate youth in the world and their number, in contrast with the rest of the planet, is increasing", affirmed Jean-Jacques Schul, coordinator of IDAY, an organisation which regroups about 200 African and European organisations, individually committed to the cause of education in Sub-Saharan Africa, during the

presentation of the IDAY Manifesto to support the second of the Millennium Development Goal that aims to ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling.

"The tragedy of the two Guinean children found dead in the landing gear of a Sabena plane in August 1999 in Brussels in a flight started from Africa with the dramatic message, written in their letter before dying: "there is too much suffering in Africa and we need you to fight against poverty and to end war there. We want to study and ask you to help us"- affirms Luisa Morgantini- represents a clear blame towards European Union, that is still not doing enough for the present and the future of these African generations.

"We didn't learn any lesson from the sacrifice of these two children. Today we still assist to too many young Africans escaping from their lands and dying before reaching our beaches or waiting to be closed in Migrant Detention Centres".

Africa is rich of human resources and raw materials and its civil society is able to take the lead of its own destiny" was explained by Ms. Marième Diop, a young African woman who addressed Europe saying "it is not only your aid that we need but, first of all, your respect for our rights, for the right of the African youth and for our wish to receive an education that will contribute to build our common development".

"We, as representatives of politics, culture and civil society share the responsibility to sustain the African youth not only because in the future they will rule the continent but because, above all, they are already one of the most important part of the society in these present days. Therefore, the commemoration of the International Day of the African Childhood should be the opportunity to remind all countries of their promise to give all children an education allowing them to live a decent life", Luisa Morgantini concluded.