



**Group of the Progressive Alliance of
Socialists & Democrats
in the European Parliament**

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Dear President von der Leyen, dear Vice-President Šefčovič,

As we are fast approaching the halfway stage of this legislative cycle, please allow us to set out the S&D Group's key political priorities up until 2024, which we sincerely hope you will integrate into September's State of the Union process, Letter of Intent and ultimately the 2022 Work Programme.

We would like to place on record our sincere appreciation to you and the entire College for your strong efforts and collaborative approach with the S&D Group, including by helping the European Union navigate through the COVID-19 pandemic, laying the foundations for our collective recovery.

As you know, our Group's political support for your presidency and the wider Commission was predicated on the 2019 Political Guidelines and related promises, which incorporated many core elements of our progressive programme. We are pleased to see that much of this programme is being implemented. However, our Group's support was never a blank cheque, and the pandemic has had major and unprecedented impacts on our way of life, socially, economically and culturally, and has exacerbated existing inequalities in almost all areas. Additionally, dramatic events such as the crisis in Afghanistan and the floods, extreme heat and wildfires across our continent are worrying reminders that it is high time to act on long-overdue matters. This means that as we now emerge from the worst of the pandemic, we can no longer countenance a "*business as usual*" approach, but rather insist on a radical rethinking of our society and economy which places sustainable well-being, including ecological, health, social progress and gender equality, at its heart, alongside unprecedented international cooperation.

In light of this, we consider that the State of the Union process and Commission Work Programme should together form the basis for a renewed contract between us, seizing this moment of profound change to build together a better world, in which we expect to see included the following 10 priorities:

- 1) **A comprehensive European Anti-Poverty Law**, as part of the full implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR), with ambitious, legally-binding targets for reducing poverty, including energy poverty, and homelessness, ending extreme poverty in Europe by 2050, especially among children, in line with the principles laid down in the EPSR and UN SDGs and building on the headline targets in the EPSR Action Plan;
- 2) **An EU-sponsored International Summit on Sustainable Development and Well-Being linked to European Semester Reform**, to work with like-minded governments globally to address progress with the UN SDGs, and increase global action and resources accordingly, while making joint efforts to agree on global well-being indicators to supplement GDP, as referred to in May's Porto Declaration; Such a process can only be credible if the Commission fully follows through on its previous commitments to integrate the UN SDGs, the European Green Deal and the EPSR into the European Semester process;
- 3) **Proposals to harness the digital transition and ensure a fairer workplace and fairer mobility** including a proposal for a European Social Security Number to assist better enforcement, portability and traceability of social security rights and a revision of the Temporary Agency Work Directive to close loopholes and provide for decent working conditions of seasonal and mobile workers, and new directives on teleworking, the right to disconnect, and the impact of artificial intelligence in the workplace in light of new working methods stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic and technological progress;
- 4) **Proposals for reform of taxation and fiscal rules**, including swift implementation of the agreement on a Global Minimum Effective Corporate Tax Rate and coordinated action to agree a European Net Wealth Tax. The minimum tax rate must be transposed into EU law and be accompanied by a strong, determined strategy to ensure its application in all Member States, and a combination of diplomatic measures and policy proposals to guarantee its worldwide implementation. At the same time, taxation should aim to reduce inequality, to be achieved through a proposal for coordinated action among Member States to agree on a European Net Wealth Tax, which should include a high exemption threshold, thus targeting only the wealthiest European households, with strongly progressive rates across a series of tax brackets; Alongside this, significant reform of fiscal rules must be proposed and swiftly agreed, in order to tackle the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and create room for adequate green and social investment, alongside timely and effective implementation of the Interinstitutional Agreement of 16 December 2020 towards the introduction of a basket of new own resources;
- 5) **A proposal to introduce a permanent Eurozone fiscal capacity** as a meaningful counter-cyclical stabilisation function to better equip the EU for future crises, building on the successful experiences of NextGenerationEU and the SURE instrument which were created only as temporary emergency tools;
- 6) **A Biodiversity Law** to ensure that declining ecosystems are restored, resilient, and adequately protected through a legally binding framework, modelled on the Climate Law, including a set of binding objectives for 2030, 2040 and 2050, incorporating the commitments made at COP 15, and the swift introduction of an effective, transparent and comprehensive biodiversity methodology to monitor and evaluate the annual biodiversity spending under the MFF. The intricate link between biodiversity and climate change cannot be ignored, and this summer's extreme weather events including floods, which left more

than 200 people dead and cities in ruins when rivers in Germany and Belgium overflowed their banks, only serve to strengthen our resolve and sense of urgency. On the other hand, countries like Italy registered the warmest temperatures on record in the history of the European Union, and the deadly wildfires in Greece are a terrifying warning to us all;

- 7) **A Framework Directive to prevent and combat all forms of gender-based violence** to complement the Istanbul Convention and the current national legal frameworks whose weaknesses in tackling the matter have been exposed during the COVID-19 pandemic. It must address issues such as female genital mutilation, forced abortion, sterilisation and marriages, and seek to tackle sexual exploitation, trafficking, cyber violence, the publication of revenge porn, and online hate speech against women with a strong intersectional approach, taking the provisions of the Convention as a minimum and adding gender-based violence to the list of EU crimes; Such an initiative should go hand in hand with the unblocking of the Anti-Discrimination Directive either through a revised proposal or the enhanced cooperation procedure;
- 8) **Development of an effective EU Mechanism on Democracy, the Rule of Law and Fundamental Rights** to reinforce and implement the values set out in Article 2 TEU including respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, and human rights, including minority rights, with an independent panel of experts to monitor the situation in all Member States, with conditionality of EU funds and a direct link to the Article 7 procedure; In the meantime we expect the Commission to fully ensure consistent application of infringement proceedings as well as strict and prompt application of the rule of law conditionality regulation, and we will not hesitate to push within the Parliament to make full use of Article 265 TFEU to ensure our concerns are taken seriously;
- 9) **A credible framework for legal migration and asylum seekers**, including the protection of Afghan refugees, notably by providing humanitarian visas and the rapid establishment of humanitarian corridors for those at-risk, fast-tracking family reunification and stepping up resettlement of vulnerable Afghan refugees from Afghanistan and neighbouring countries, especially women and children. We call on the European Commission to make an urgent proposal to the Council to invoke and implement the Temporary Protection Directive 2001/55/EC, which would provide immediate and temporary protection to Afghan refugees who arrive in the EU. Those seeking protection from persecution and human rights violations deserve our solidarity and have a right to be heard without risking their life, as part of a legal framework for humanitarian corridors/visas, an instrument to establish a coordinated approach on search and rescue efforts, and subsequent predictable relocation. Such a framework must also include a proposal for legal migration for those in medium and low-paid employment, thus recognising the enormous contribution made by many brave and dedicated migrants, who during the pandemic are allowing our essential public services and other key sectors to continue functioning and serving society as a whole;
- 10) **A Union that speaks with one voice, acts as a truly global player** and is thus able to project a positive role in the world and make a difference in response to a crisis. A stronger Union can only be achieved by making qualified majority decision-making the rule in foreign policy, by ensuring a single voice and more influence in multilateral fora and by investing more in EU capabilities. The dramatic events in Afghanistan have highlighted the ever more relevant need for EU strategic autonomy. **Reform of the global multilateral system**, with a stronger EU role therein, is also needed, by strengthening the UN and other

multilateral organisations, so that progress and not confrontation is the norm, reactivating the WTO and its negotiating function and rulebook, including reform of the Appellate Body, based on a fully operational two-tier dispute settlement system, and active support for the WTO Trade and Health Initiative and the establishment of the Trade and Health Committee. At the same time, we must enhance the coherence, visibility and effectiveness of the EU's human rights engagement, intensify humanitarian efforts and strengthen democracy and rule of law, with new and existing instruments. At the European level, we must also take additional necessary steps directed at the opening of enlargement negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia. The EU must also enact Mandatory Human Rights Due Diligence Legislation to introduce binding rules for companies to prevent human rights abuses and ensure remedy for victims, including swift action to outlaw placing on the market of goods produced from forced labour, and launch a new partnership initiative for the Global South;

We very much look forward to discussing these 10 issues and with you, and naturally we will judge our response to the State of the Union address and Commission Work Programme 2022 accordingly.

Please rest assured that we very much value the strong working relationship that we have established together, and we look forward to intensifying this relationship and our joint efforts up until the 2024 elections, with a clear focus on delivery for all European citizens.

Kind Regards,

Iratxe García Pérez, President
Simona Bonafè, Parliamentary Secretary
Pedro Marques, Vice-President (responsible for the CWP in the PES)