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Basque Friendship Group in the European Parliament

An EFA press release

The Basque Friendship Group in the European Parliament was first set up during the 2004-2009 parliamentary term by MEPs from various political groups who wished to support the peace process in the Basque Country.

At a press conference at the European Parliament in Brussels this morning MEPs explained that the group will continue its work during this current parliamentary term.

MEPs Bairbre de Brún (Sinn Fein), Tatjana Zdanoka (PCTVL), Oriol Junqueras (Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya), François Alfonsi (U Partitue di a Nazione Corsa) and Csaba Sógor (EPP) introduced new members of the group and discussed the challenges ahead in terms of supporting a peaceful resolution of the conflict in the Basque Country at EU level.

The Friendship Group published the following statement:

24th February 2010

Peace Process in the Basque Country

The Friendship group "towards a peace process in the Basque Country" was created in January 2006. At that time we publicly said that opportunities to create a peace process were being developed in the Basque Country. Many reacted with incredulity and irresponsibility to our words. As we later learned the fact is that while we were saying so the parties in the Basque Country were already engaged in dialogue and soon after that the peace process officially started.

Many positive and negative things have happened in the Basque Country since the Friendship started, but the conflict in the Basque Country remains unresolved.

Elections to the European Parliament were held on June 2009 and as a consequence many of our colleagues left the Parliament. We would like to thank and greet Helmuth Markov, Jens Holm, Gérard Onesta, Jonas Sjöstedt, Bernat Joan and Erik Meijer for their work in the European Parliament in support of the resolution of the political conflict in the Basque Country. Thank you all!

The Friendship "Towards a peace process in the Basque Country" has been in a process of reconstituting itself.

Today we are very pleased to present the new group. 12 MEPs, from different political backgrounds but united in our commitment to support the peaceful resolution of the Basque conflict:

1- Tatjana ?danoka: Green-EFA MEP
2- Frieda Brepoels: Green-EFA MEP
3- Bart Staes: Green-EFA MEP
4- Oriol Junqueras: Green-EFA MEP
5- François Alfonsi: Green-EFA MEP
6- Jill Evans: Green-EFA MEP
7- Ian Hudghton: Green-EFA MEP
8- Alyn Smith: Green-EFA MEP
9- Bairbre de Brún: GUE-NGL MEP
10- Eva-Britt Svensson: GUE-NGL MEP
11- Ji?í Ma?tálka: GUE-NGL MEP
12- Csaba Sógor: EPP MEP

As we present the new Friendship group "Toward a peace process in the Basque Country", we believe that steps of great importance are being taken in the Basque Country in order to achieve a peaceful scenario.

The Abertzale Left have recently announced the outcome of their internal debate in a public document named "stand up Euskal Herria" committing itself to exclusively political and democratic means. The resolution seeks to develop a peace process "in a complete absence of violence and without interference" and multiparty talks "conducted in accordance with the Senator Mitchell Principles used to overcome the conflict in the North of Ireland "with the objective of reaching a "stable and lasting peace in the Basque Country".

We believe this decision facilitates a positive scenario that would have to bring about a peace process. We ask all parties involved in the conflict to react responsibly and to engage in a process that will lead to peace talks so that the Basque people will be able to decide about their future, freely and without any kind of intimidation.

We ask the Spanish Government to act with responsibility, to engage itself in a democratic peace process and, as presidency of the Council of the EU, to encourage the involvement of EU Institutions in the promotion of the peaceful resolution of the last remaining armed conflict in the EU.

Friendship group "Towards a Peace Process in the Basque Country"

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