EFA parliamentary group - Photo European Parl

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Press release | 19.10.2011

EFA MEPs hopeful for Basque peace process

EFA press release following call for end to violence

MEPs from the European Free Alliance group in the European Parliament have welcomed a new international initiative to end the armed conflict in the Basque Country.

They are supportive of international negotiations to urge ETA to end their 40-year campaign of violence in the Basque country and elsewhere. A declaration which urges ETA to announce an end to violence was made at an international peace conference in Donostia/San Sebastian attended by delegates including ex-UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, former Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Bruntland and former Prime Minister of Ireland, Bertie Ahern.

EFA MEPs have been active in raising the issue of the Basque Peace process at EU level as members of the European Parliament's Basque Friendship group.

SNP MEP **Alyn Smith** (Scotland) said:

"The Basque conflict is Europe's last remaining armed conflict, and it is a long story of heartbreak with no winners, only losers, not least democracy.

"Recent developments show real promise to take the gun and the bomb out of Basque politics for good. This conference is the most positive development in the Basque Country in years and it is clear the peace process needs considerably more international help and support to see it to a peaceful conclusion.

"The momentum that this process has gained has been remarkable, but to proceed to the next stage we as outsiders can help to break down some of the barriers of mistrust that still exist."

Plaid Cymru MEP **Jill Evans** (Wales) said:

"This is a unique opportunity to build a lasting and sustainable peace and end a decades long armed conflict. I urge all of those concerned to seize this unique chance for peace.

"In particular, it is now time for the European Union to play a far more active role in supporting the peace process, as it did with success in Northern Ireland. There is still a very long way to go, but this declaration is a

very important step on the path to peace."

N-VA MEP **Frieda Brepoels** (Flanders) said:

"The Spanish government's refusal of support for the initiative up to now is both incomprehensible and unacceptable. Past peace negotiations have taught us that all parties need to sit around the table. The excuses made by many in Madrid are thoroughly without foundation. One could easily get the impression that Madrid fears a breakthrough for peace.

"Building a lasting peace is in the interest not only of the Basque Country, but also of Spain and indeed of the European Union."

PNC MEP **François Alfonsi** (Corsica) said:

"These recent developments show what a crucial role the international community has to play in supporting efforts to bring peace to the Basque Country. I welcome the declaration made by Kofi Annan, Bertie Ahern and others. It should also be a clear to signal to the European Union that it must now assume its responsibilities. It's no longer credible for the EU to stand aside and say this is a matter for the Member state.

"I would like to see the EU take an active role in supporting this emerging peace process, which is in the interests of all Europeans."

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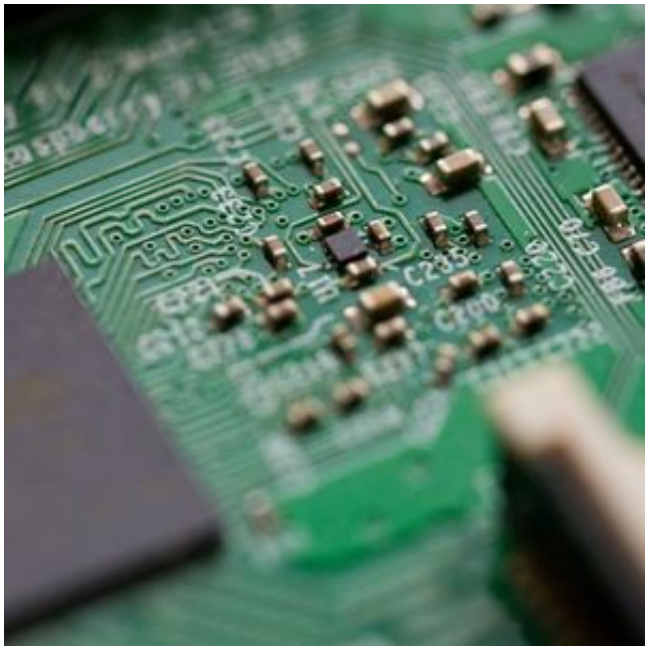


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