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More than sixty former MEPs back Basque peace process

Press release from Frieda Brepoels

More than sixty former MEPs are backing the Aiete Declaration which seeks a peaceful resolution to the armed conflict in the Basque Country. The declaration and a list of first signatories amongst former MEPs was published following a press conference in Brussels this morning.

Taking part were current N-VA MEP **Frieda Brepoels** who has been active in supporting the Basque Peace process in the European Parliament, as well as former MEPs Nelly Maes (Flanders), Koldo Gorostiaga and Karmelo Landa (Basque Country). Corsican MEP **François Alfonsi** was also present to give his support as a member of the European Parliament's Basque Friendship group.

In particular they highlighted the importance of international support for a peaceful resolution to the conflict, and the need for the EU institutions to play a supportive role.

The Basque representatives also called upon more MEPs to sign up in support and noted that French President elect François Hollande is also a former MEP, and appealed for his support.

Speaking at the press conference, **Frieda Brepoels** said:

"Two years ago in this very room the Brussels Declaration was put forward by South African human rights lawyer Brian Currin. This was the first public step taken by the international community in supporting the current phase of the Basque peace process. In turn this created the momentum which led eventually to last October's historic Aiete declaration.

"Six weeks ago, Jonathan Powell was our guest at a conference in this parliament in support of peace in the Basque country. He is a signatory of the Aiete declaration, and he urged the parties involved to redouble their efforts to move forward with the peace process, and warned of the dangers of failing to keep the momentum going after the agreement has been signed. In that regard, I'm very pleased that former MEPs have also shown their willingness to actively engage themselves in support of a peaceful future for the Basque people."

The full declaration is copied below.

Former MEP's support for the Declaration of the "International Conference for promoting the

resolution of the conflict in the Basque Country"

On the 17th October 2011 the "International Conference for promoting the resolution of the conflict in the Basque Country" took place in Donostia – San Sebastian, at its end Kofi Annan, Gro Harlem Bruntland, Bertie Ahern, Pierre Joxe, Gerry Adams and Jonathan Powell made public an important declaration, known as the AIETE Declaration.

1. We call upon ETA to make a public declaration of the definitive cessation of all armed action and to request talks with the governments of Spain and France to address exclusively the consequences of the conflict.

2. If such a declaration is made we urge the governments of Spain and France to welcome it and agree to talks exclusively to deal with the consequences of the conflict.

3. We urge that major steps be taken to promote reconciliation, recognize, compensate and assist all victims, recognize the harm that has been done and seek to heal personal and social wounds.

4. In our experience of resolving conflicts there are often other issues that, if addressed, can assist in the attainment of lasting peace. We suggest that non violent actors and political representatives meet and discuss political and other related issues, in consultation with the citizenry, that could contribute to a new era without conflict. In our experience third party observers or facilitators help such dialogue. Here, such dialogue could also be assisted by international facilitators, if that were desired by those involved.

5. We are willing to form a committee to follow up these recommendations.
The former MEP's endorsing this statement want to support the recommendations made on that declaration and call on the European Institutions to play their role in the resolution of the last armed confrontation in the European Union.

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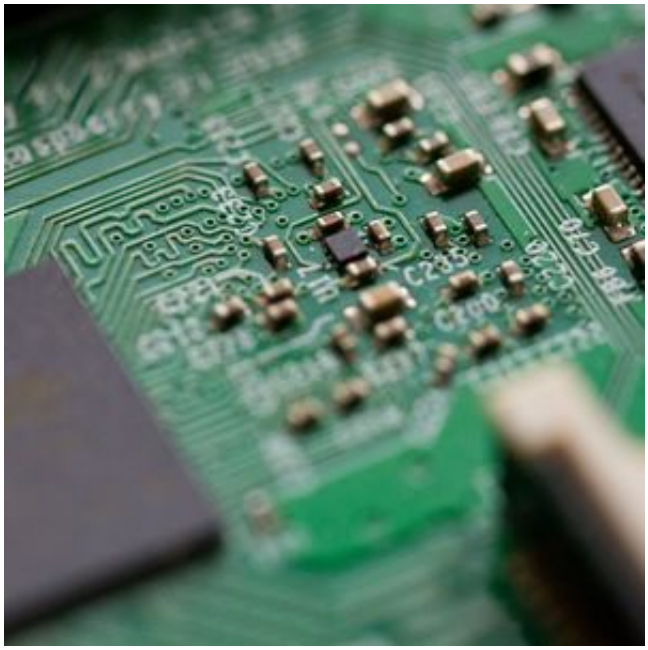


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