

PRESS NOTE

BRIAN CURRIN: PRESS CONFERENCE AT EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

International declaration on the resolution of the conflict in the Basque Country
(29 march 2010 - 11h - European Parliament, Brussels)

The press conference was hosted by Flemish MEP Frieda Brepoels (Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie) in which Brian Currin presented an international declaration agreed to and signed by many international personalities on the issue of the resolution of the conflict in the Basque country.

Born in 1950, **Brian Currin** is a South African Human Rights lawyer who specializes in peace process facilitation. He was National Director of Lawyers for Human Rights during the last decade of apartheid. In 1994 he was appointed by South Africa President Nelson Mandela to chair a Prison Audit Committee which dealt with the release of political prisoners. He subsequently represented victims before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. He has also worked in Sri Lanka, Rwanda, Malawi, Namibia, the Middle East, the Basque Country and Northern Ireland on issues relating to Human Rights and Political Transformation.

Background

On 16 February 2010 Abertzale Left Regional Assemblies put an end to the debate %Clarifying the Political Phase and Strategy+. More than six hundred representatives of more than two hundred and seventy local assemblies concluded the debate, defined and decided the strategy to be developed in the future, thereby ratifying the Resolution: %Stand Up Euskal Herria+. In summary they resolved as follows:

1. *We reiterate our commitment to use exclusively peaceful and democratic means and channels. It is these means that at present make possible the necessary popular mobilization and unity of action of the democratic and progressive forces of the Basque Country, and that guarantee the opening and advance of the democratic process. This democratic process must be developed in the total absence of violence and without interference. We support dialogue and negotiations amongst parties conducted in accordance with the Mitchell Principles.*
2. *A growing accumulation of forces, exclusively through popular institutional and ideological struggle is the basis to take the State (Spain) to the terrain of a free and democratic exchange of ideas and political projects. To be able, in this way, to achieve a situation in which Basque citizens freely, peacefully and democratically will be able to take the decisions about their own future.*

3. *We call upon Basque people and all of the progressive, democratic and popular forces in the Basque Country, whilst maintaining and respecting the history, identity and being of each one, to unite efforts to make this process irreversible. We call, in the same way, on the International community to accompany this process.*
4. *We are convinced that on this path and through common work and labour and popular mobilization the coming months will bring us new advances and a situation that will ensure the irreversibility of this process.*

Statement by International Leaders in Conflict Resolution and Peace Processes

We, the undersigned, welcome and commend the proposed steps and new public commitment of the Basque Pro-independence Left (Abertzale Left) to ~~an~~ exclusively political and democratic means and a ~~total~~ absence of violence to attain its political goals.

Fully carried out, this commitment can be a major step in ending the last remaining conflict in Europe.

We note the expectation that the coming months may present a situation where the commitment to peaceful, democratic and non-violent means becomes an irreversible reality. To that end, we appeal to ETA to support this commitment by declaring a permanent, fully verified ceasefire.

Such a declaration appropriately responded to by Government would permit new political and democratic efforts to advance, differences to be resolved and lasting peace attained.

Endorsers

- **Betty Williams:** Nobel Peace Laureate for her work as co-founder of Community of Peace People, an organization dedicated to promoting a peaceful resolution to the Troubles in Northern Ireland
- **Denis Haughey:** Was full time assistant to John Hume leader of the Social Democratic Labour Party and served on the Executive of the Party of European Socialists and Socialist International. He participated in the negotiations giving rise to the Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland
- **John Hume:** Nobel Peace Laureate for his role in bringing peace to Northern Ireland. Is regarded as one of the architects of the NI peace process. Also recipient of the Gandhi Peace Prize and the Martin Luther King Award.
- **Archbishop Desmond Tutu:** Nobel Peace Laureate and recipient of the Albert Schweitzer Prize for Humanitarianism and the Gandhi Peace Prize.

- He chaired the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa and is currently Chairperson of the Group of Elders
- **Mary Robinson:** Served as the first female President of the Republic of Ireland and immediately thereafter the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. She is a founding member and Chair of the Council of Women World Leaders
 - **President FW de Klerk:** Nobel Peace Laureate (Jointly with Nelson Mandela) for his role in ending apartheid in South Africa. He was the last State President of apartheid-era South Africa and was Deputy President during the Presidency of Nelson Mandela
 - **The Nelson Mandela Foundation** (with an addendum stating that the statement is fully in accord with the ethos of their founder Nelson Mandela)
 - **Aldo Civico:** Director of the Centre for International Conflict Resolution at Columbia University.
 - **Sheryl Brown:** Virtual Diplomacy Director, United States Institute of Peace Washington DC.
 - **Andrea Bartoli:** Director of the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, George Mason University, Washington DC
 - **Alan Smith:** UNESCO Chair on Peace Education, University of Ulster.
 - **Christopher Mitchell:** Emeritus Professor of Conflict Research, Institute for Conflict Analysis & Resolution USA
 - **John P Linstrot:** Senior Researcher, International Peace Research Institute, Oslo
 - **Hurst Hannum:** Professor of International Law. The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University
 - **Jon Etchemendy:** Provost (chief academic administrator) at Stanford University.
 - **William Kelly:** Archive of Humanist Art
 - **Albert Reynolds:** Past Taoiseach (Prime Minister) of the Republic of Ireland
 - **Jonathon Powell:** Chief of Staff in Prime Minister Tony Blair's office. He was regarded as Mr. Blair's closest political aide
 - **Nuala O'Doan:** Baroness (Member of the House of Lords), first Police Ombud to Northern Ireland and special envoy in Timor-Leste for the Republic of Ireland.
 - **Raymond Kendall:** former General Secretary INTERPOL
 - **Silvia Casale:** former President of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

Rationale and Context

Brian Currin explained the objectives of the statement by international leaders in the context of the Basque Conflict and answered questions from the media.

Audiovisual footage

You will find videos of the press conference on the following FTP links :

The video for internet in low resolution

- <ftp://video:exchange@greenmediabox.eu/brepoels>
- Click on the link, right click on the file and "save target as".
- The video is **100329_brepoels_bru_en.flv** (it will be there at about 2pm)

The video for broadcasting quality

- You have to use an ftp client with the following settings :
 - Site : greenmediabox.eu
 - Login : video
 - Password : exchange
- the file for them is : **494_0968_04.MP4** (it will be there at about 6pm)