



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

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SPEECH BY GIANNI PITTELLA TO S&D GROUP

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I am very happy that there is a large Labour party participation in this very important meeting and that we also have Mr Martin SCHULZ here with us. I would like to express our gratitude to Martin not just my own personal and political gratitude but that of the whole parliamentary group for everything that Martin has done as a Member of the European Parliament and for everything that he has done as our Group Leader as well as what he has done as the President of the European Parliament. I do not think we are going too far in saying that his Presidency has been the best in the history of the European Union. You have our personal and political support Martin and I am convinced that in your next battles you will be very successful and you will use that success to support our causes and battles in Europe. Thank you once again.

Last week we had a meeting with the Heads of the Delegations and the Bureau which was immediately after Martin's statement and what came out of those discussions was a clear political direction. The Socialists will not accept the EPP's monopoly over the European institutions. We have to state clearly that we cannot accept an EPP candidate for the Parliament presidency because it will lead to monopoly and hegemony. I have heard from our leaders, from our Commissioners, the PES Leader, the President of the Parliament. This morning I have spoken to Renzi, Hollande, Mogherini, Timmermans, Moscovici, Kern, Stanishev and I'm going to continue to maintain these contacts. In that way we can coordinate our strategy which of course is one that is going to affect the destiny of all the institutions. From my discussions we see that there is a clear and strong position from the Socialist family. Cooperation in legislative terms will be finished if these conditions are to go ahead. We are starting a new political phase, a new political

season with a new agenda for the second part of this parliament. Although it's not completely new as we had already started to think about these things before. You will remember the debate that the Group had after Brexit, after the Trump victory - we already discussed increasing the profile of our identity and our battles, not just limiting ourselves to Martin Schulz being the President of the European Parliament again.

So what would be the features of this new phase? First of all we need a political balance between the three institutions. That means that we cannot accept three EPP presidencies and we will not accept discrimination against the Socialists. Secondly, we have to strengthen the roles of European Commissioners, particularly those who have fought austerity and fought for growth. Thirdly we have to stand firm in the Oettinger case. We cannot accept this from a Commissioner who has made racist statements and clumsy excuses and apologies or that his is suspected of a conflict of interests with lobbyists.

Fourthly, we need to be clear of the Group's political priorities: an end to austerity, protecting the fiscal stance and fiscal capacity proposed by the Commission, strong initiatives to support investment with a real European plan. We need to focus on the social pillar, social rights, bringing more morality into economics, standing firmer on conflicts of interest, a socialist policy on international trade. On taxes, the principle that tax has to be paid where profits are made. A new economic model which is founded on sustainability and on energy transition; a plan for youth employment; more resources in the budget and greater attention to culture.

If the Group agrees, I will use this as the platform for my meetings with all pro-European parties, including the GUE Group. I have spoken to Sergei who has said he wants to have a meeting with our Leaders on 15 December and we very much hope that the Socialist Family will come out with a shared common position from that. I want to be very clear that anyone who thinks that we are orphaned or that we are backed into a corner or incapable of acting is incorrect. This Group exists and we are strong. We are the second biggest group in this Parliament and we will not let anyone walk all over us! We have said this to Weber before Martin took his decision. We were very clear then and it is a shame that he did not understand or at least was pretending not to have understood. We as a group are united. Our votes are essential for the election of any president of the European Parliament and for any legislation to get through so we will continue with our

heads held high. We have had an excellent presidency under Mr Schulz and we want to continue along that same line.

So to finish, and I have said this to the heads of the groups, I've said this in the Bureau, we have to strengthen the Group's political force. We have to do that in the coming weeks and we will do that through a presidency from your Group Leader and I am here for you. I stood to lead the Group so I expect to see support when I stand in the coming weeks. If you ask me to stand as candidate I will accept that and we will show that we are strong and united. I do not have any secret ambitions. This is not done for personal gain. I want to lead the Group and after what was done to damage Martin I want to ensure that his Group goes forward with its head held high. If my candidacy can help with that then I am here for you.

I would conclude very briefly on six points:

1. We are all aware of what Martin Schulz represents for us. I have worked with Martin for 17 years, increasingly closely in recent years and I know how much he has been a vital support here. The fact that he is leaving us means on the one hand that he will do an excellent job of work in Germany and his work in Germany will be helpful for us but it also means that we must build a new leadership with our Group supporting it otherwise our Group may break down.
2. Secondly in this new phase we cannot allow the EPP to hold three president roles in the institutions. At least one of the institutions needs to go to the Socialists and I would like to thank Patrizia for the points made in the meeting of the Heads of Delegation. I think it became clear that we need a clear stance from the Socialists and Democrats here and the whole business of Tusk and leadership is not a matter for now.
3. Against our desire a cooperative coalition broke down and Martin's choice was driven by that. If at the end of the Group meeting you support me as a candidate, it's not just the traditional groups with whom we supported the European Commission but the other groups as well - the Greens, the GUE and the ECR I will have to talk to. All groups that I consider European groups. We will have to be very progressive in our approach. We will have to see what kind of common ground there can be behind a turnaround programme otherwise none of this makes any sense. This is not the last Group meeting for an opportunity for an exchange of views. I will keep you fully briefed of all the steps. However, I think we need to recognise that the political environment is no longer

confined to the old coalition and we have to include other political forces within that current political environment. We need a platform for change. A strongly progressive platform.

4. Our priorities that we will put into our document have been amended. We can finalise them still further but these are strong priorities: a turnaround in the economy, a turnaround in social affairs, a moral turnaround when it comes to the Oettinger case and all the other points we have made.

5. It has to be a genuine candidacy otherwise it will just not happen. I am running not just to be part of the race, I am running to win. If you run to win, there can be no fall-back or plan B. Although there may be times along the route we need to give thought to some things but I am running to win. If I set off then that has to be the intention otherwise it is all a pretence. We would lose our opportunity to influence other groups. In my press conference I will say that I am running as a candidate with the unanimity of the Socialist and Democrat Group with a view to becoming President of the European Parliament. There is no plan B.

6. Finally, I take on board Antonio Panzeri's ever precious advice: this phase needs to be managed smartly, with courage and determination. The fact the clock is ticking is not irrelevant. We would make a mistake to be held in stalemate now. It would give a competitive edge to other groups. That is why we have to come out with our candidacy now and not in a week's time. Today this candidacy will give all the other groups pause for thought. They are divided, they have more candidates to consider, so it is harder for them. That is why I think we need to set off in this direction.