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Brazil

Statement by Socialist Democracy

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1 Socialist Democracy, a tendency within the Workers' Party (PT), held its VII Conference on 21-23 November 2003. The focus of the conference debates was the new situation in Brazil with the election of Lula: a critical evaluation of almost one year of the government led by the PT, the impact on the social movements and on the Workers' Party, the strategic debates underway over alternative programmes and in relation to the decisive question of party building in Brazil.

2 The Conference considered it was important to defend the positive values of the PT's history (its programmatic contribution, the right to tendency and internal democracy, its feminist achievements, the ability to bring together the different forces and experiences of the left). In this context it also emphasised the need to reactivate the links between the party organisation and the broad social and political movement around the PT.

3 The Conference decided to use the legitimacy of defending this historic project of the PT, and its strategy as a socialist and democratic party, to intervene in the dispute over the course taken by the party. Given this conflict within the party, the Conference agreed to try to develop a mass left current as a pole of reference for rebuilding the PT as a socialist and democratic party. Developing this current and struggling to rebuild the PT as a socialist party represents an alternative both to accepting the pressures towards programmatic adaptation, and to the sectarian project of a new party. Both the latter mean giving up on the whole experience of building a mass, socialist and democratic party.

4 The Conference passed a specific resolution, "In Defence of Democracy. Against the expulsion of PT members of parliament", where we made clear that if our comrade Heloisa Helena were expelled, we would immediately appeal to the next PT National Meeting, and even call for it to be brought forward. This initiative also sought to maintain our political links with comrade Heloisa, whilst strengthening the political framework agreed by the Conference to fight over the direction taken by the PT.

5 On 14 December 2003 the PT National Directorate decided to expel four PT members of parliament. Of these, federal deputies Luciana Genro, Baba and Joao Fontes had already been promoting the idea of forming another political party. That was not the case with comrade Heloisa Helena. At the PT's National Directorate we succeeded in uniting all the PT's minority currents, plus senator Eduardo Suplicy, in voting against the expulsions. That same week, comrade Walter Pinheiro, on behalf of DS, presented an appeal to the PT's next National Meeting.

6 Also in December. A few members of DS in Rio de Janeiro and Parana signed a manifesto saying they were leaving the PT and joining in the building of a new party.

7 On 19 January 2004 in Rio de Janeiro, a few members of DS took part in a meeting and signed a manifesto in favour of setting up a new political party.

8 The proclamation of a new left party and the tasks already scheduled for bringing it into existence are a legitimate political choice for those who feel it is necessary. However, the National Co-ordination of DS considers this initiative to be in direct contradiction with the decisions of our recent Conference.

9 The National Co-ordination of DS, a tendency in the PT, elected at its VII National Conference, at its first meeting on 7 February 2004, decided:

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- to call on those members who have left the PT to rejoin, so that together we can carry out the resolutions of our VII Conference, strengthening and not weakening our current;
- to call on all these comrades to reactivate their links with our current and distance themselves from the creation of this new party;
- to help create a broad movement, in the party, in the government, in parliament and in society, that pushes the PT to recover its historic positions and the Lula government to carry out the social transformations that the workers and the Brazilian people desire.
- to explain to the Workers' Party as a whole that the actions and declarations of these comrades in leaving the PT and working for the creation of a new party do not represent the membership of DS, as expressed at our National Conference, nor do they have the approval of its National Coordination.

Sao Paulo, 7 February 2004