



**Remarks by Iratxe García Pérez on the occasion of her re-election as
President of the S&D Group
Brussels, 25 June 2024**

Friends, comrades, I would like to thank you from the bottom of my heart for your trust, loyalty and commitment. The roses I am holding are not just for me, they are for all of you. I would like to give you each a rose, one hundred and thirty six roses, as an expression of the socialism that grows in all of us.

Thank you so much for making this day a reality, a day that I will remember for the rest of my life. I will also remember what we have lived together in the last five years: our ideals, our victories, our laughter, our tears and, above all, the warmth of all the colleagues who have accompanied me on this journey.

I also think of those who are no longer here, but continue to give us the strength to go on. I think of our President David Sassoli and our Secretary General Michael Hoppe, I think of your loved ones, and I think of my parents.

Friends, today I do not come to this meeting just representing myself. Today, like all of you, I come to represent the social democratic group in the European Parliament. A few days ago, I asked you not to forget that we represent social democracy – the highest and noblest of ideas, the only ideology that can free the oppressed and help humanity progress to heights it has never before reached.

These last few days, I have been asking myself the same question I first asked myself before I joined the Spanish Socialist Workers Party: What are our ideals? Are they improving our personal situation and those of our children? No, we want more.

We want people who work their entire lives to live well, not in poverty.

We want secure and well-paid jobs that are not obstacles to a competitive economy, but as the pillars of it.

We want education, health, and housing for all, not just for the privileged few.

We want science and art to belong to everybody, not to a select few.

We want to fight against climate change and achieve sustainable growth without leaving anyone behind.

We want a digital society, but one that respects people's rights and interests.

We want to live in a society where men and women are equal, and where people can be whoever they want to be, regardless of their social background.

In short, we want to put an end to all injustice. Friends, we represent the forces that make up the social democratic group, and as such, we are obliged to take our ideas everywhere.

I'm sure you remember that, not so long ago, it was said that social democracy had no future, that citizens no longer shared our aspirations, that our principles and values had been diluted with individualism, and even that we were indistinguishable from conservatives.

Then, suddenly, came a pandemic that plunged the world into a previously unimaginable nightmare. Soon after, Putin's war against Ukraine dragged our continent back into its darkest past, with a level of destruction not seen in the last seventy years – a war that also hit the purchasing power of our citizens.

But time proved that those prophecies about social democracy were wrong, because, once again, social democracy saved us. It was our commitment to solidarity and the welfare state that helped us overcome those terrible challenges and keep moving forward.

Would we have saved millions of workers and businesses during the pandemic without the social democratic ideas that drove the SURE programme and *Next Generation EU*?

Would we have transformed our industries with clean energy and led the battle for energy independence in the face of Putin without the social democratic convictions that built the Green Deal?

Would we have protected the working and middle classes without the social democratic aspirations that built the Social Pillar?

No, we would be much worse off. That is why the ninth of June proved that we were right, because time always proves us right. And today, in the face of the right wing's desertion, who find themselves increasingly unable to resist the rise of the far right, it is up to us, the Social Democrats, to take responsibility for putting an end to the threat of the far right and ensure that history moves in the right direction.

A few days ago, I asked you not to be content with simply resisting the reactionary wave. At a time when many citizens are suffering from poverty, unemployment and lack of living wages, and are desperate for affordable housing, we must progress.

The best way to progress is to continue defending the principles and values of social democracy. The best way to progress is to show citizens that our commitment to Europe is unwavering, because Europe has always been in the DNA of social democracy.

We are pro-European because we believe that the European Union is our hope, our project, and our destiny. We have never doubted the historic need to unite the peoples of Europe, just as we have never doubted the virtues of European integration.

We are pro-European because we share the values of democracy, the rule of law, gender equality and the protection of minorities. We do not see people seeking refuge as a threat, but as victims.

Our Union cannot function with cherry-picked solidarity; our Union progresses through non-negotiable compliance with the values set out in our treaties. And our loyalty to the values of respect for human beings is powerful and generous enough to serve as an example in a world shaken by crisis. Let us proudly defend our universal values, because Europe is the part of the world where we find them lived out most truly.

We are pro-European because we want our states to pool their sovereignty to face up to challenges such as climate change, the digital transition, tax evasion, or the imperial desires of the tyrant Putin. We firmly believe that the best way to defend our common interests is by pooling our national sovereignty, fostering cooperation and solidarity. Who could possibly think that we would be better off defending ourselves against Russia's weaponisation of energy and China's technological might, as separate states, outside the EU?

We are pro-European because we believe that our social market economy is the best source of progress – a social model that is unique in the world, guaranteeing education, health care, and pensions for everyone, – a social model that is capable of producing approximately fifteen percent of the world's wealth while aspiring to achieve climate neutrality through the Green Deal.

But the battle for our Union's social model is a long one and has not yet been won. There is still too much inequality. We all know that we have to make constant efforts in innovation and competitiveness to combine economic growth with social cohesion.

Because, what use are growth, innovation and competitiveness if we cannot give workers decent jobs with rising wages; invest in public housing so that young people can plan their futures; and lift almost one quarter of the EU population out of poverty and social exclusion?

We are pro-European because our long history of cruel wars, hatred, and fear of the other has taught us that conflicts should be resolved peacefully whenever possible. We do not send soldiers in unmarked uniforms to die in neighbouring countries, and we do not indoctrinate young people to blow themselves up in public places. Our guiding light is international law.

Let us keep in mind that the peace we have enjoyed over the last seventy years is an anomaly in European history. Because the world does not live in peace, and our neighbourhood in Ukraine, in Gaza, and in the Sahel is bleeding before our eyes. It will be our willingness to stand together that will enable us to secure peace in the world and build a Defence Union so that we are not completely dependent on our American allies.

We, Europeans, cannot change our history of savage wars. But today, our sense of injustice in the face of suffering pushes us to defend Ukraine until it achieves its final victory and its destiny of a just peace, and to show world that peace in the Middle East can and must become a reality, with the birth of a Palestinian state.

We are also pro-European because history shows us that, after every crisis, our Union emerges more integrated and united. And we believe, now more than ever, that unity is strength, and that unity is worth fighting for to allow us to lead progress. Yes, the Social Democrats are pro-European, and we will be even more so in the future.

Friends, it is time to remind citizens that social democracy is not just an ideology. It is not just a political movement. Above all, social democracy is a belief in change. A belief that, despite the difficulties and setbacks, despite the resistance of the elites who live off injustice, the present and the future of our society can and must be fairer, more prosperous and more sustainable.

Without social democracy, the European Union has no future. Do not forget that what we build today will be our history tomorrow. Let us act with courage, enthusiasm and vision. Let us be proud of our achievements and let us show the solidarity necessary to progress in building a fairer Union.

Friends, the emotions that I am feeling now do not stop me from acknowledging the moment we are living through. Being the President of the Socialists and Democrats Group in the European Parliament is a great honour and a great responsibility, but I will only be able to do it with the help of the men and women who stand alongside me in this great social democratic family.