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Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development

Sub-Committee on the European Social Charter

Declaration by the Sub-Committee participating in the High-level Conference on the European Social Charter on behalf of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Turin, 17-18 October 2014

In its Resolution 1884 (2012) on “Austerity measures - a danger for democracy and social rights”, the Parliamentary Assembly expressed its concern about the impact of austerity programmes on social rights standards. These concerns have been supported in a more recent report by the Council of Europe’s Commissioner for Human Rights on “Safeguarding human rights in times of economic crisis”.

Many austerity and fiscal consolidation programmes were implemented without prior consultation with social partners and are not in conformity with the European Social Charter, nor the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

With a view to giving new impetus to the protection of social rights, in particular the right to work, across Europe, **the Sub-Committee on the European Social Charter** calls upon European governments and parliaments to strengthen the protection of social rights and related mechanisms, by:

- Assessing the impact of past austerity measures on social and democratic rights, and encouraging the adoption of programmes for the restoration of rights and of institutions for social dialogue where necessary;
- Ensuring that fiscal objectives and structural reforms do not hamper decent work and employment for all, and promote fair income distribution;
- Reinvigorating and establishing the pivotal role of the European Social Charter in this context;
- Doing their utmost to ensure that standards defined by the Council of Europe and the European Union, including in their jurisdictions, are respected to avoid any discrepancies between the approaches followed by member States and European institutions;
- With regard to the social rights protection mechanism in particular:
 - Further promoting the full ratification and implementation of the revised European Social Charter (STE No. 163) which remains the most comprehensive instrument in this field;
 - Lifting any national reservations and opt-outs concerning specific articles of the Charter;
 - Ratifying the Additional Protocol Providing for a System of Collective Complaints (ETS No. 158), thus allowing labour and other non-governmental organisations to submit complaints to the European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR);
 - Where they still abide by the 1961 Charter, ratifying the Amending Protocol (“Turin Protocol”, ETS No. 142) to allow for the election of the 15 members of the European Committee of Social Rights by the Assembly, in order to strengthen the legitimacy of social rights monitoring processes.

As parliamentarians of the Greater Europe, we are committed to supporting relevant efforts undertaken by our respective national authorities, notably by taking legislative and political initiatives, but also by facilitating links between our national authorities and social partners in our respective constituencies.