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DECLARATION OF THE PES CONGRESS IN SUPPORT OF MADRID AND AGAINST TERRORISM

Brussels, 24 April 2004

The attacks of 11 March in Madrid were a crime against Spain, but also against Europe. All Europeans feel a sense of solidarity with the Spanish people, and more particularly with the victims of the brutal terrorist act. We share the suffering of the people of Madrid and their determination to face up to the consequences of such a terrible blow.

Terrorism is a grave threat to peace and coexistence worldwide. Ending this threat must be a priority for any political organisation. We must fight against terrorism while fully respecting the rule of law, by achieving a comprehensive agreement on the methods that will be applied to this end, on the instruments that must be used to apprehend criminals and to put an end to the political and economic support that sustains them.

Terrorists seek to stir up hatred and create uncertainty. We must all work together to ensure that they do not succeed in either aim.

The best way to combat hatred is to prevent any outbreak of xenophobia. The terrorists have no homeland, and it is therefore extremely unjust to associate their criminal acts with a nation, a culture or a religion. The most effective way to overcome uncertainty is by reaffirming, within and beyond the borders of Europe, our sense of identity: our commitment to democracy, to the defence of the principle of the rule of law and to respect for human rights. Our strength lies in these principles and they are the best guarantee of victory over terrorism. Among those who died in the attacks of 11 March in Madrid were many citizens who had arrived in Europe from other countries in search of a better life. The best tribute we can make to them is keep moving forward towards achieving a more pluralist and tolerant Europe.

No political aims can justify terrorism. No cause can justify the assassination of a human being. Alongside police and judicial measures, we must promote actions to deprive the assassins of any support within society. Combating exclusion and poverty, fostering respect for human rights and working to improve living conditions in developing countries are the best means of preventing the criminals' actions from generating support.

Throughout our history, Europeans have suffered massively from the scourge of violence and destruction. This experience in the face of barbarism and fanaticism must serve to work for global peace built on a just and lasting basis. The best way to achieve this is to strive for the security that peace gives rather than to hope to attain peace solely through increased security.

Europe will never forget the victims of 11 March. Their memorial must be to act as a stimulus to develop this project for a shared future that European construction represents.

We therefore call, as the European Parliament did recently, for the future European Constitution, once approved, to be signed formally in Madrid in homage to the victims of 11 March, because the best way to respond to terrorism is to strengthen the liberty and democracy that the institutions of the European Union represent.