

Closing speech delivered by Bernadette Ségol
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I want to thank, very warmly, all the high level representatives of EU institutions, the politicians who honored the ETUC with their presence and comments, and to also thank, very warmly, all the high level trade unionists from the various countries and the members in this room for discussing, for listening to the problems that we, as a trade union, are facing.

We had much to listen to and much to swallow today. I'm sure things deserve to be discussed further and you need not worry. We are going to continue - this is not a one day event, it is not a one week event, it is not a one month event. We are going to continue for weeks for months and possibly for years.

It is a question of democracy. It's a question of the social model, it's a question of social governance for the people we represent. This will never get out of our radars.

We know that very soon the European Union will produce a roadmap and that in this roadmap they are foreseeing a part concerning the social dimension of the EMU.

The ETUC will participate actively in the drafting of this roadmap. We will base ourselves on our joint position, the proposal for a Social Compact for Europe. I think it will be easier for the ETUC to come to a joint position than, possibly, it will be for many governments to agree because we stand for common values, and because, beyond all differences between us, what we want is social progress and progress for the people we represent.

Yes, we want and we need a social dimension. But what is it? This social dimension cannot be a quick fix; it cannot be a plaster that you stick on a squashed leg.

The social dimension is an integral part of economic governance. Social Europe cannot happen if social protection, public services, industrial relations and trade unions rights are attacked. There will not be a social Europe in that way.

There cannot be a social dimension with bad governance. And for us, what is good governance? For us, good governance exists if it is directed towards the well being of people, to their progress towards good employment, more equality, fair taxation and investments.

That is the message we have carried and will continue to carry in many ways and on all fronts with the European institutions, but that we will also carry to our members because they are the ones who need to be with us if this message is to be carried through.

Friends, we cannot have a social dimension for only one part of Europe; this is not possible. All Member States, all workers in all Member States, want and need a

social dimension and we do agree with our British friends that it is not a solution to take away from workers the social rights they should be enjoying.

Here we have trade union leaders and we know that we will never compete by making our people, our workers, the people that have put their trust in us, by making them weaker, by making them poorer.

Attacking workers and workers rights is not a solution for the European Union.

We've heard a lot about the European social model and we have heard that it is in danger. The minister (María Fátima Báñez García), this morning said that it was an inheritance, a legacy.

Yes it is, and yes we should be proud of it and we should defend it. We know it is in danger but we have to be there to promote it.

In this social model, which is made of public services, social protection, sound industrial relations, there is a very important word which is social dialogue.

We all want social dialogue. Everybody speaks about it: all leaders, institutions, and politicians speak about the social dialogue. But the social dialogue must have a reality. At national level it means that discussions between trade union employers and possibly government must lead to solutions, that unions must be listened to; and this is the same at European level.

Social dialogue cannot just be a trick. It cannot just be a nice exchange where we give our opinion. We want to be constructive, but we want to be listened to and that is a very big challenge. There are very many things we need to change to see this social dialogue become a reality.

In one's year time, we are going to have elections at the European Parliament. The ETUC will be putting its strength, its values, its objectives within the Social Compact for Europe to the candidates to the European parliament so that, possibly, after this period we get more support for the social Europe we need.

Friends, it is very clear to me after this day – the ETUC is there to stay. It is there to be stronger and it is more important than ever that we work together at EU level. There is no national solution. There is no national solution for the workers we represent and the fear that we have of being overwhelmed by the far right must be fought at all costs.

I know, you know, we know, they all know that trade unions, that the ETUC is not something of the past. It is something which is part of a democracy. Trade unions are part of the future. Let's go out with this in mind for the next forty years.