

## Charter of European Parties for a non-racist Society

### **WE, THE DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL PARTIES OF EUROPE,**

**Having regard** to the international human rights instruments signed and ratified by our European Union Member States, in particular to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination,

**Having regard** to article 1 of this Convention, which defines racial discrimination as "... any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise on an equal footing of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life ...",

**Having regard** to the preamble to the Single European Act in which the Member States of the European Community declare to work together to promote democracy on the basis of the fundamental rights recognised in the constitutions and laws of the Member States, in the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and the European Social Charter,

**Having regard** to the Treaty of Amsterdam which enables the European Community to "... take appropriate action to combat discrimination based on ... racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief..." and facilitates police and judicial cooperation in the framework of the European Union in preventing and combating racism and xenophobia,

**Recognising** that the fundamental rights as enshrined in the international human rights instruments signed and ratified by the EU member states include the right to free and uninhibited political speech and debate,

**Mindful** that according to these same international human rights instruments one's political freedoms are not absolute in view of the equally fundamental right to be protected against racial discrimination and that therefore political freedoms cannot be allowed to be abused to be exploited, cause or initiate prejudice on the grounds of race, colour, ethnic origin or nationality or for the purpose of seeking to gain the sympathy of the electorate for prejudice on such grounds,

**Being aware** of the special tasks and responsibilities of political parties as actors in a democratic political process, defending, articulating and bearing witness to the basic principles of a democratic society; providing a platform for discussion on issues where there may be differences of opinion, integrating different views into the process of political decision making, thereby enabling society to solve conflicts of interest and of opinion between various social groups through dialogue rather than through opting out and conflict; selecting representatives at various levels for active participation in the political process,

**Convinced** that free use of one's political rights can and must go hand in hand with firmly upholding the principle of non-discrimination and is inherent in the democratic process itself,

**Being convinced** furthermore that representation of ethnic minority groups in the political process is properly an integral part of the democratic process, since political parties are or should strive to be a reflection of society,

### **COMMIT OURSELVES TO ADHERE TO THE FOLLOWING SPECIFIC PRINCIPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE:**

- **To defend** basic human rights and democratic principles and to reject all forms of racist violence, incitement to racial hatred and harassment and any form of racial discrimination.
- **To refuse** to display, to publish or to have published, to distribute or to endorse in any way views and positions which stir up or invite, or may reasonably be expected to stir up or to invite prejudices, hostility or division between people of different ethnic or national origins or religious beliefs, and to deal firmly with any racist sentiments and behaviour within its own ranks.
- **To deal responsibly and fairly** with sensitive topics relating to such groups and to avoid their stigmatization.
- **To refrain from** any form of political alliance or cooperation at all levels with any political party which incites or attempts to stir up racial or ethnic prejudices and racial hatred.
- **To strive for** the fair representation of the above mentioned groups at all levels of the parties

with a special responsibility for the party leadership to stimulate and support the recruitment of candidates from these groups for political functions as well as membership.

**And further pledge** to take appropriate action to ensure that all persons who work for or associate themselves in any way with any of our election campaigns or other activities will be aware of and at all times act in accordance with the above principles.

Utrecht, 28 February 1998