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**DECLARATION BY THE “INTERNATIONAL KOLPING SOCIETY”
ON EUROPEAN INTEGRATION AND THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE
(2006 European Declaration, Brasov / Romania)**

- 1.** Europe is facing difficult issues such as population ageing, the need for networked dialogue between cultures and religions, coping with the consequences of increasing globalisation, climate change and energy security. Social change and economic trends are creating new challenges, for instance concerning bioethics, social protection and migration, etc. Meeting these challenges demands solidarity and partnership in Greater Europe.
- 2.** Europe-wide democratic progress is not yet guaranteed. Some of the countries which have joined the democratic process in Greater Europe in recent years do not yet enjoy the necessary degree of democratic stability and need support.
- 3.** Following the rejection of the European constitutional treaty, the European Union is experiencing a “constitutional crisis” and EU citizens are afraid that the European social model is being undermined.
- 4.** There is increasingly heated debate in the EU about the limits of a policy of enlargement, and the view that the EU needs clearly defined borders is steadily gaining ground.
- 5.** The INTERNATIONAL KOLPING SOCIETY regards this debate as confirmation of its stance that organisations like the COUNCIL OF EUROPE and the OSCE are still essential, regardless of the EU's position in the process of European unification.
- 6.** As demonstrated in several declarations made at the last Council of Europe Summit in Warsaw (May 2005), the COUNCIL OF EUROPE is aware of the challenges and is doing its utmost to develop its core activities and increase their impact.
- 7.** The COUNCIL OF EUROPE regularly attracts media attention through various high-profile initiatives and/or landmark rulings by the European Court of Human Rights. In this connection, the INTERNATIONAL KOLPING SOCIETY particularly appreciates the fact that, with its Parliamentary Assembly, the COUNCIL OF EUROPE was the first European institution to highlight the fundamental issue of possible secret arrests and illegal inter-state transfers of prisoners (terrorists) in which Council of Europe member states were involved.
- 8.** From the point of view of the INTERNATIONAL KOLPING SOCIETY, the European Convention on Human Rights and the unifying force of the rulings of the European Court of Human Rights remain key elements of the COUNCIL OF EUROPE. The INTERNATIONAL KOLPING SOCIETY notes with regret that the states in which most violations of the European Convention on Human Rights are found to have taken place include Turkey, Ukraine, Greece, Russia and Italy.
- 9.** In its 2005 European declaration, the INTERNATIONAL KOLPING SOCIETY supported the proposal made at the Warsaw Summit in May 2005 that the COUNCIL OF EUROPE should be one of the initiators and organisers of a thoroughly prepared “Summit for Europe” in 2007, attended by all European organisations and institutions. It hopes that this initiative will lead to greater efficiency and a clearer delimitation of the tasks of each of the European organisations.

As a COUNCIL OF EUROPE NGO, the INTERNATIONAL KOLPING SOCIETY

- supports the COUNCIL OF EUROPE in its efforts effectively to implement the action plan agreed upon at the Third Council of Europe Summit in Warsaw, to put its relations with the European Union on an updated, clearer and more political footing and to carry out priority projects in its core areas, and **makes the following proposals to that end:**

1. Human rights

- welcomes the fact that the Committee of Ministers and the member states of the COUNCIL OF EUROPE are unequivocally committed to ensuring the long-term effectiveness of the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Court of Human Rights;
- stresses the urgent need for the rapid entry into force of Protocol 14 to the European Convention on Human Rights, providing for further reform of the Convention supervisory machinery;
- would welcome in-depth discussion by the Group of Wise Persons or the Committee of Ministers about the status of the Court and the role of the Convention in the 21st century;
- welcomes the fact that, once Protocol 14 enters into force, the Committee of Ministers will be able to ask the European Court of Human Rights for interpretations of individual judgments, including in cases where countries persistently refuse to execute judgements;

2. Strengthening democracy

- welcomes the fact that the Forum for the Future of Democracy agreed upon in Warsaw in May 2005 has begun operation and will be holding a meeting about political parties in Moscow in October 2006, and hopes that the results of the meeting will be used in the preparation of a code of conduct for political parties in Greater Europe;
- is disappointed that no possibility has yet emerged for using the forum in preparing regular reports on the state of democracy in the member states of the COUNCIL OF EUROPE, as the Parliamentary Assembly and the Committee of Ministers are still divided on the role of the forum;

3. COUNCIL OF EUROPE campaigns

- supports the COUNCIL OF EUROPE campaign to combat violence against women (including domestic violence), which was launched in 2006 and is due to run until 2008, by when the COUNCIL OF EUROPE Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings should have entered into force;

4. Co-operation between the COUNCIL OF EUROPE and the EU

- notes that, alongside the implementation of the decisions of the Warsaw Summit, the development of the COUNCIL OF EUROPE's relations with the EU has been the main issue at the Council in recent months;
- takes note that these relations are to be updated in a memorandum of understanding (MoU) and transformed into a partnership;
- hopes that the COUNCIL OF EUROPE's particular role as a pioneer in the fields of human rights, democracy and the rule of law will be properly reflected in the final MoU;
- hopes that Prime Minister Juncker's proposals will be included in the MoU and that the long-term recommendations (role of the COUNCIL OF EUROPE and its institutions, interlinking of EU and Council of Europe law, accession by the EU to the European Convention on Human Rights) will be discussed in greater depth by a joint working group of senior EU and COUNCIL OF EUROPE representatives;

5. Social rights

- supports the recommendations concerning the revised European Social Charter, which were presented on its 10th anniversary, namely that the Committee of Ministers should exert greater pressure on states shown to have violated the provisions of the Social Charter and that the Parliamentary Assembly should look more closely at completed collective complaints procedures;

6. European legal area and COUNCIL OF EUROPE convention system

- welcomes the fact that the Juncker report deals in detail with the pan-European legal area, which is particularly important for a Greater Europe without dividing lines;

- points out that COUNCIL OF EUROPE Heads of State and Government in May 2005 recognised the importance of the organisation's convention system as the basis for a pan-European legal area, and calls on the COUNCIL OF EUROPE to draw up further conventions on key pan-European legal issues;

7. Culture and intercultural dialogue

- underlines that the COUNCIL OF EUROPE and its Assembly are still a key forum for discussing major issues concerning sport, young people and culture and reaching joint pan-European decisions;

- supports the efforts made to achieve fuller intercultural and inter-faith dialogue between communities in Europe, and between Europe and neighbouring regions;

- hopes that the COUNCIL OF EUROPE White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue will be completed by the end of 2007, ie in time for the launch of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue which the EU has declared for 2008;

8. NGOs/INGOs

The INTERNATIONAL KOLPING SOCIETY welcomes the fact that INGOs are being involved ever more closely in the COUNCIL OF EUROPE's institutional system. This is reflected in the President of the INGO Conference of the COUNCIL OF EUROPE, Ms Annelise Oeschger, being allowed to take the floor both at COUNCIL OF EUROPE foreign ministers' sessions and at Summits. In addition, INGOs are increasingly being involved as key players from the outset at major COUNCIL OF EUROPE events, eg the launch of campaigns and the establishment of new bodies such as the Forum for the Future of Democracy. As a COUNCIL OF EUROPE NGO, the INTERNATIONAL KOLPING SOCIETY welcomes this trend and hopes that the relations between the COUNCIL OF EUROPE and the INGOs will continue to develop in such a positive and mutually beneficial manner.

In adopting this declaration and sending it to 1 600 leading public figures throughout Europe, the INTERNATIONAL KOLPING SOCIETY wishes to support the activities of the COUNCIL OF EUROPE. Through its educational work in 21 COUNCIL OF EUROPE member states, it also seeks to ensure that the significance of the COUNCIL OF EUROPE's role in furthering European integration, upholding human rights and consolidating democracy is properly recognised in society at large.

Cologne / Brasov, 22 October 2006

For the International Kolping Society:

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International Kolping Society (IKS)

In 1849 the Catholic priest **Adolph Kolping** founded an association in Cologne for single journeymen in order to give them some help in solving their problems caused by the industrial revolution and being summarized with the term „**social question**“.

At the beginning it was a small association, but meanwhile it has developed to a world-wide society that counts today about 6,000 regional groups and 470,000 members in **58 countries**. In spite of the enormous growth and the changed situation in society the Kolping Society has remained true to its original task and is still working towards the solution of the social question. However, this work is not only limited to the national level, it also includes the international level.

The Kolping Society sees itself as a **Catholic social organization**. It supports its members in a special way in developing their personal talents, it offers help to its members and society as a whole and it promotes the common good in the Christian sense with the activities of its members and groups.

The work of the Kolping Society is aimed at the integral individual, who is not only offered help and stimulation in all aspects of life, but also provided with an opportunity to share his problems and also his knowledge and skills. It is the close interconnection and interrelation of the individual spheres of life, which is the starting-point and the ground for the comprehensive work of the Kolping Society and its service towards the integral development of the individual.

According to this approach the work of the Kolping Society concentrates on the following aspects: **work and profession, marriage and family, society and state, culture and leisure time**.

The Kolping Society is a democratically structured organization, and therefore it feels responsible for the promotion of democracy, too. It also fights for the special human dignity in any phase of life and for the inalienable and inviolable human rights.

The Kolping Society in Europe feels in a special way obliged to the European idea – owing to its historical development and its programme – and co-operates intensively with the **Council of Europe** and the **European Union** or the **European Parliament**. Since 1974 it has held the „**Consultative Status at the Council of Europe**“ in Strasbourg as NGO (Non-Governmental Organization).

A special sign of this intensive co-operation are the European seminars realized annually for 25 years in Strasbourg (Palais de l'Europe).

Owing to its world-wide commitment it has furthermore the „**Consultative Status at the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations**“ and was admitted to the „**Special List of Non-Governmental International Organizations of the International Labour Office (ILO)**“.

After the fall of the Iron Curtain in **1989** the International Kolping Society saw an important task in contributing to **develop a civil society** in the formerly communist states, and it did so by building up independent National Organizations. Meanwhile active organizational structures have developed in many Central and East European countries, like for example Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Romania, Slovakia, Albania etc.. These Kolping Societies have picked up important fields of activity like youth and family work, general and professional training, promotion of small enterprises and social work, but also socio-political education, and they have also undertaken urgent social tasks in self-responsibility.

Although the Kolping Society was founded in Europe and has still kept its international head-quarters in Cologne, it has extended its fields of activity all over the whole world in the meantime. The **promotion of the international co-operation** and solidarity is a central and important task, and the International Kolping Society contributes with its work to solve the international social question.

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