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## **Interview with Antonio Tajani, President of the European Parliament, during the European Development Days**



The Press Office of EIUC/Global Campus is accredited to follow the **European Development Days**, Europe's leading forum on development since 2006 and now widely considered as the "Davos of

Development”, organised by the EU and taking place in Brussels this week.

In this prestigious forum the development community gets together each year to share ideas and experiences in ways that inspire new partnerships and innovative solutions to the world’s most pressing challenges.

Within this framework, our Press Office had the opportunity to ask to the **President of the European Parliament** Antonio Tajani to share his impressions about the #EDD18 and, most importantly, about issues concerning Human Rights.

**How is the European Parliament involved in the European Development Days in Brussels? And what are the expectations of the Institution during those days?**

*The European Parliament has been involved in the European Development Days from the start. They represent a key moment in the development community and international cooperation. Last year, I signed on behalf of the Parliament and together with the Prime Minister of Malta Joseph Muscat, on behalf of the Council and Member States, the President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker and the High Representative/Vice President Federica Mogherini, the New European Consensus on Development. A new collective vision and plan of action to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development which, for the first time, applies in its entirety to all European Union Institutions and all Member States, which commit to work more closely together.*

*This year, the focus will be on gender equality and women empowerment that are at the core of European values and enshrined within the EU's legal and political framework. This has always been a priority of the European Parliament; let us not forget we have a dedicated Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM) tackling those issues.*

*Moreover, when it comes to development the European Parliament plays a key role. Last year on top of the New European Consensus on Development, we approved the European Fund for Sustainable Development as well as the EU's instrument for contributing to stability and peace (IcSP). Finally, the negotiations on Post-Cotonou will start soon and we will make sure to defend the position adopted by the European Parliament.*

**What is the importance that the European Parliament gives to Education on Human Rights and Democracy? How is the institution supporting this type of education around the world?**

*The European Parliament is the driving force in defending and championing freedom, democracy and human rights, inside and outside our borders. The Committee on Foreign Affairs has a dedicated Subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI) to tackle serious and unacceptable violation of human rights*

*worldwide. In various cases, we have also decided to send a Parliamentary Delegation to assess the humanitarian situation on the ground. The European Parliament has always been at the frontline to defend human dignity in all circumstances.*

*The European Parliament also supports human rights through the annual Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, established in 1988. The prize is awarded to individuals who have made an exceptional contribution to the fight for human rights across the globe, drawing attention to human rights violations as well as supporting the laureates and their cause. In 2017, it was awarded to the Democratic Opposition in Venezuela.*

**Considering EIDHR an example of this support, will it be strengthened in the near future with the current state of affairs in this area?**

*The EIDHR puts a strong focus on civil society organisations that strengthen diplomacy and the political dialogue. I am confident that with the current budget of €1,332.75 million for 2014-2020, an increase of approximately 21% compared to the 2007-2013 budget, it is possible to strengthen democracy and human rights worldwide.*

**What are the challenges do you think the EU Parliament will need to address in the next years related to Human Rights? Technology and Human Rights (e.g. privacy/data protection/surveillance/fake news, etc.) / Migration and Human Rights (e.g. Asylum/gender violence/ child's rights) and more?**

*As a war correspondent, I experienced the dangers journalists face on a daily basis in pursuit of the truth. The murders of Daphne Caruana Galizia and Ján Kuciak are a stain on our identity, based on freedom of expression. The European Parliament calls for concrete measures for the protection of investigative journalists because they are on the frontline of our democracy. Nonetheless, not only the protection of journalists and press freedom is essential for human rights but also the citizens' data and privacy.*

*We cannot accept illicit use of personal data to manipulate elections. Democracy cannot be turned into a marketing operation. This is why I invited Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook CEO and founder, to meet political leaders who were able to probe him on several issues surrounding data privacy. An in-depth hearing will be held with senior Facebook executives on 4 June before the civil liberties committee. I want to make sure that the European Parliament continues to play a key role in representing the interests of our citizens on matters that are of great importance to them. Thus, new EU rules have been adopted by the European Parliament to protect data. GDPR is the biggest privacy legislation reform since the Internet's inception. This regulation establishes global standards on data protection that put the EU at forefront in protecting its citizens. No more risk of personal data abuse and manipulation, full control of videos/images, explicit consent required on use of personal info.*

**What are the personal campaigns that Antonio Tajani MEP is giving extra attention to these days? Could you share your goals with us? Any comment about the preservation of life on the planet and/or other global goals?**

*My aim is to relaunch and strengthen our partnership with Africa. Just last week in Strasbourg we welcomed the President of Guinea, Alpha Condé, who addressed the plenary. He is the third African leader in a year to address the European Parliament.*

*On top of this, in November 2017, an 'African Week' and a high-level conference 'For a new partnership with Africa' in the Plenary Chamber of the European Parliament were organised. It was the first time that such events took place. And this happened just before the African Union - European Union Summit in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.*

*The consequences of the migration crisis have a destabilising effect on the Mediterranean, Balkans and Europe as a whole. The only solution is to develop and stabilise Africa. The EUR 3.4 billion investment plan for Africa currently on the table is an important step in the right direction. However, it is nowhere near enough. We need to increase this amount at least ten-fold. This is why I call for a Marshall Plan for Africa. The focus of all our efforts must be young people: they hold the key to a more stable, prosperous and modern Africa.*

**Could you give a personal message to students and professors of the Global Campus of Human Rights, a network of 100 Universities supported by the EU that are our followers and reading this interview? How could they be inspired and encouraged by the EU Parliament President?**

*Since I was elected, the objective of my mandate was to bring the European Parliament closer to the citizens. Especially as we are approaching the 2019 European elections. I have been serving the European citizens in different EU institutions for over 20 years. I want to ensure that the voice of the people from everywhere in the EU is heard and taken into account in the decision-making process.*

*The Treaty of Rome brought 60 years of peace, prosperity and freedom. It reminds us of how far we have come. At the same time, we cannot take any of these achievements for granted. We must recognise that the EU is at crossroads and facing numerous challenges. But every crisis in the past has made the EU stronger and more resilient and I am convinced that we'll come out of it stronger again.*

*I think that young people are agents of innovation, development and change and, as such, are natural and essential contributors to conflict prevention and peacebuilding around the world. This is the main message I passed two weeks ago at an event with young leaders. We have to understand that in such demographic realities, the youth holds an enormous potential for change and positive action. I also think that that it is a mistake to refer to a well-known cliché that defines the youth as "future leaders". I personally think that you are already leaders of today! And, as such, you need and deserve a place at the table.*

*A few days ago in Strasbourg, I opened the third edition of the European Youth Event that regrouped 8,000 youths aged between 16 and 30 years, from all over Europe. The best way to relaunch our project, promoting a more political and effective Europe, is to treasure the energy and passion of the new generations. We have the duty to pass on this precious gift left to us by the founding fathers: freedom, democracy and fundamental rights must always be defended and can never be taken for granted.*

For more information contact our [Press Office](#):

Elisa Aquino

Isotta Esposito

[pressoffice@eiuc.org](mailto:pressoffice@eiuc.org)

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