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Interview with the new President of the European Parliament David Sassoli



The Press Office of the Global Campus of Human Rights had the opportunity to ask to the new **President of the European Parliament** David Sassoli to share his impressions about the current Human Rights

challenges ahead for his presidency and for the Institution he represents.

And his views about child's rights when the world today celebrates the **30th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child**.

What is the importance that the European Parliament under your presidency will give to the Education on Human Rights and Democracy?

Respect for human rights and democracy are the fundamental principles that underpin our Union. The founding fathers recognised that only by creating common institutions could we guarantee peace and protect human rights throughout Europe. They had witnessed the atrocities of World War II and saw how easily rights and freedoms could be crushed and democracies subverted. They wanted to create a system that would ensure this could never happen again.

Our union has been a remarkable success in securing peace and protecting human rights. However, as the memory of war fades, we have to be vigilant against complacency. The lessons of the past are not etched permanently on our collective consciousness; it is only through education that we can hope to pass them on to each future generation.

Over the past few years, we have seen the principles that underpin our democracies chipped away, even in EU member states. It is more important than ever that we educate about why these fundamental ideas and rights are needed. For me education on these issues, both formally in schools and universities, but also within the public at large must be an absolute priority. The future of Europe depends on it.

What are the main challenges do you think the EU Parliament will need to address in the next years related to Human Rights?

Freedom of expression, minority rights, gender equality, the right to claim asylum, to name just a few. In all these areas, we have seen the progress of the last few decades being challenged. It is essential that we continue fighting for these essential principles whenever they are threatened, be it inside Europe or around the world.

We also need to be aware of how the world is changing and the new opportunities and threats these bring for our fundamental rights. Over the next five years, digitisation will touch on ever more parts of our lives, bringing profound questions about the right to privacy, freedom of speech and expression. I think how we manage and shape these new developments will be a defining issue for this Parliament.

It is the 30th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child this year. Any particular campaigns you care for related to child's rights protection?

The 30th anniversary is an important moment to recognise the progress that has been made on protecting Children's rights in Europe and around the globe. In the Parliament, we will hold a high-level conference and will light the Parliament blue as part of a worldwide campaign. We want to raise awareness of the convention, to celebrate what has been achieved but also focus on what still needs to be done.

The European Parliament has prioritised the rights of children, particularly access to education. Every child, regardless of where they are born, deserves a good quality education. Still, over 260 million children around the world still have no access to a school or formal education. Addressing this must be a major priority for the European Union in the coming years.

What are the personal campaigns that David Sassoli MEP is giving extra attention these days? Could you share some of your goals with us?

In October, I spoke in the European Parliament on the European and World Day against the death penalty. I am convinced that death inflicted by the state can never constitute true justice. The death penalty is an affront to human dignity and cannot be tolerated under any circumstances. Our Parliament is determined and committed to the abolition of the death penalty. We will do everything in our power to reach a day when this barbarity is banned throughout the world.

Could you give a personal message to students and professors of the Global Campus of Human Rights, a network of 100 Universities around the world supported by the EU, that are our followers and reading this interview?

How could they be inspired and encouraged by the EU Parliament President?

My personal message to all those studying and working with the Global Campus of Human Rights is don't be disheartened, never stop fighting for our fundamental values, and hold those in positions of power to account.

For those of my generation, who watched the transition of many European countries from dictatorship to democracy, saw Europe reunited following the fall of the Berlin wall, we felt the world was coming closer together, that human rights would be strengthened, not threatened in subsequent decades. Sadly, that has not been the case.

Perhaps we forgot that progress is not something that just happens. It is won only by organisation, education, and hard work by those that care. So learn from the lessons of my generation, do not take hard won rights and freedoms for granted but instead appreciate and fight for them every single day. Use new

technologies, organise effectively, and ensure those in power cannot ignore the issues you care most about.

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