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Call for EU role in Basque Peace Process

An EFA press release

MEPs from the European Free Alliance and other groups who are members of the Parliament's **Basque Friendship Group** today joined forces to call for the EU to help build a lasting peace. At a press conference in Strasbourg the MEPs published a statement welcoming ETA's recent announcement of a ceasefire and called for the EU institutions to play an active role in resolving the conflict.

The MEPs taking part were **Oriol Junqueras** (ERC, Catalonia), **Bairbre de Brun** (Sinn Fein, Ireland), **François Alfonsi** (PNC/Europe Ecologie), **Tatjana Zdanoka** (PCTVL, Latvia), **Catherine Greze** (Europe Ecologie).

The Basque Friendship Group in the European Parliament is a cross-party grouping of MEPs set up in 2005 to support a peaceful resolution of the conflict in the Basque Country.

The full statement published today is copied below.

The European Free Alliance (EFA) Group in the European Parliament includes MEPs from Scotland, Wales, Flanders, Catalonia, Corsica and Latvia, who advance the cause of Europe's stateless nations, regions and disadvantaged minorities

Basque Friendship Group

Press conference 19/01/2011 on ETA's cease-fire 10/01/2011

The Basque friendship welcomes ETA's announcement of a general and permanent cease-fire that can be verified by the international community.

We want to stress the importance of this cease-fire. ETA has responded to both the request of the Brussels Declaration[1] and the Gernika Agreement[2]: This positive response enables the International Contact Group, ICG[3] to commence its work.

It opens a hopeful path for the Basque society. a path that we hope will take them to a just and sustainable peace

For these reasons the ETA statement has to be understood as a crucial step for peace in the Basque Country and, once again, we should not forget that peace in the Basque Country, means peace in the heart of Europe.

However hopeful the situation is we would like to point out the following:

1. We understand that the Abertzale Left has to be legal for a multiparty talks process to take place. We also believe that prison and security policies should be adapted to the new situation and be used as tools for the resolution of the conflict rather than for its perpetuation.
2. As members of the European Parliament we would like to recall the motion on the Basque issue approved by this institution in October 2006 and stress the role that in our opinion all European institutions should play. The Parliament called on the Commission to take appropriate action to promote peace in the Basque Country.
3. Furthermore, European Institutions should begin to act and prepare for the resolution of this conflict. The Irish case is an example of how Europe can help overcoming difficult situations, the PEACE program has been described as an important factor for reconciliation in Ireland, Europe has to collaborate also in the resolution of the Basque conflict.

Finally in this fifth anniversary of the creation of the friendship Group, we would like to renew our commitment to work for a peace process in the Basque Country, we encourage our colleagues and the Basque society to do the same.

Basque Friendship Group
Strasbourg, 19 January 2011

[1] The **29th March 2010** Brian Currin presented an international declaration agreed to and signed by international personalities on the issue of the resolution of the conflict in the Basque country. The press conference took place in Brussels, and it is known as the Brussels Declaration, and was hosted by Frieda Brepoels, MEP for N-VA and member of the friendship. More info on: http://www.n-va.be/files/default/generated/blikvanger/endorsers_basque_peacstatement.pdf

[2] The **25th September 2010** 5 political parties and 23 social agents endorsed in Gernika an agreement on the minimum democratic conditions. The agreement listed those conditions and gave the principles and contents on which political dialogue and negotiation have to be based. <http://www.ezkerabertzalea.info/doku/bakebidean-en.pdf>

[3] The **12th November 2010** Brian Currin announced the Mandate of the International Contact Group. http://issuu.com/basquepeaceprocess/docs/mandate_and_role_of_the_international_contact_grou

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Responsible MEPs

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