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**Address by Pierre Laurent,
national secretary
of the French Communist Party**

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Dear friends and comrades,

It is great to be here! Together! At the beautiful Fête de l'Humanité ! What a successful event this year!

The Fête de l'Humanité is something we wait for all year, we count the days until it begins, the programme is planned and planned again, we share inside tips for getting the most out of the festival, we reminisce about festivals past. And when the day finally dawns, we find that happiness has an address, and it is the Parc départemental de la Courneuve where we meet today.

And yet this beautiful local park is threatened by real estate developers!

The park exists because Communists in elected office in the Seine-Saint-Denis believed that ordinary people should have access to nature, beauty and fresh air.

We believe that access to protected natural environments should not be reserved for those who live in the wealthiest districts alone.

Just 3 months from the COP 21 that will be held here in Paris, we cannot let this pass!

This festival is unique. Unique in size and in cultural quality; unique for the profusion of humanity, the personal encounters that take place; unique for the level of debates and the range of guests.

Here we talk about politics ... of course ... in the most profound sense of the term, in a vast citizens' agora in the open air.

Here we are not interested in parsing phrases or settling petty quarrels. Here we are building something new, we are focused on culture, music, art, sport, literature, theatre. We speak of equality, fraternity, liberty and social justice. We build hope and refuse to be discouraged.

Here we speak of peace and internationalism.

Last August 6th to 9th, I led a delegation to Japan for the commemoration of the 70th anniversary of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Every year, pacifists from around the world come together to remind us that the struggle for peace and nuclear disarmament is still a pressing issue.

I would like to share with you the emotion I experienced when, at 8:15 a.m., the time of the explosion over Hiroshima, silence filled the Peace Park where we had gathered. It was a silence full of meaning, a deafening silence, a silence that seemed to cry out «Never again»!

On that date in 1945, 140,000 women, children and men were annihilated in an instant. War is the negation of humanity.

I know that war is back in fashion, that many «unenlightened observers» measure the greatness of France in terms of the number of foreign military interventions.

François Hollande is spoken of as a wartime leader. Warmongers praise his «interventionist» foreign policy, which in fact debases our country. France is not Africa's

policeman.

Nicolas Sarkozy has suggested new techniques for sorting out desirable refugees from the rest.

His stance is shameless: it was he who lit the fire under the powder keg of Libya, hurling the country into chaos and fuelling jihadist networks.

Monsieur Sarkozy, shut up! You have done enough damage to world peace as it is.

The greatness of France is not to be measured in numbers of battlefields!

France is great when we share a message of universal peace and when, in all circumstances, we engage our forces to promote reason, political solutions, and democracy over the absurdity of war.

France would be truly glorious if we would take up the mantle of our great pacifists, from Hugo to Jaurès, from Romain Rolland to Henri Barbusse; we could silence the guns of war in order to hear the voice of diplomacy.

Mr. Hollande, what are you waiting for to declare French recognition of Palestine in the 1967 borders; to put all our weight behind a just and lasting peace between Palestinians and Israelis?

Our Parliament voted in favour of this recognition ten months ago. What are you waiting for to submit a resolution to the Security Council for the re-engagement of the peace process, as Laurent Fabius, Foreign Affairs minister, promised?

What are you waiting for, Mr. Hollande, to speak this simple phrase: it is time to free the entire planet from all nuclear weapons.

Go to the UN General Assembly a few days from now and dare to say these words. You will see that the international stature of France will grow immensely!

A political leader who is equal to the challenges of the 21st Century must call for the abolition and destruction of nuclear arms!

The money we save could then be used to bring an end to war, to redress inequalities, eliminate poverty, stop pandemics and control global warming.

War is chaos, death, hunger and exile. War is the means to force situations upon people that are contrary to their own interests. War enables capitalism to organise the pillage of raw materials.

Peace is another vision of the world. It is a vision of international security enjoyed by all. Peace is the unity of peoples, human security through development, cooperation and solidarity.

Those who oppose us are quick to say that our pacifism is naïve at best in the face of the terrorist threat.

I say that the opposite is true. It is by spreading hatred in hearts, building walls and barbed wire fences between human beings that we feed barbarous terrorism.

We base our views on undeniable evidence: the «war on terrorism» launched by the United States after 9/11 has been a resounding failure. Since 2001, jihadist centres

have increased by a multiple of 13. Terrorist attacks have continued and ISIL (a.k.a. ISIS or DAESH) has spread its tentacles over a swathe of the Middle East, taking advantage of war, chaos, arms trafficking and the destabilisation of entire countries such as Iraq and Syria.

Nor has our country been spared. What should give us pause for thought is that the French youth – for yes, they were youth from within our society – who took up arms in these terror attacks had spent time in these war zones.

I believe that each one of us here at the Fête de l'Humanité will remember for all of our lives where we were when we heard of the Charlie Hebdo killings, the vast pain that submerged us, the tears we fought to hold back despite that pain, the horror of the Hyper-Casher supermarket hostage situation that followed a few days later. Charb, Wolinski, Tignous, Honoré, ...they were all friends of the Fête de l'Humanité, their laughter and mischief are sorely missed this weekend. Our thoughts are with them now.

In those terrible days, the people of France showed the most beautiful response to terrorism: unconditional love of freedom.

During the exceptional citizen movement that followed, we also observed the fractures in our society. This made it clear that the French republican motto only makes sense when taken as a whole concept: Liberty, Equality, Fraternity.

It is also clear that the response to terrorism can only be strong if it includes working to ensure that the Republic fosters fundamental rights everywhere and for everyone, throughout our land and for each and every person.

Terrorism feeds on despair, ignorance and gloomy perspectives. We must fight it with the force of equality, which offers a vision of a brighter future for all and creates confidence in collective destiny.

We cannot fight terrorism by sacrificing freedom. Recent legislation passed in France on expanding intelligence gathering is a serious mistake. You cannot fight those who attack our freedom by further restricting freedom! On the contrary, more freedom is what we need!

We do not fight terrorism, on the contrary we feed it, by fanning the flames of hatred, by speaking of «the war on the enemy within». Those who spread this talk only create monsters, they are the salesmen of the extreme – feeding on the very thing they claim to condemn.

We cannot fight terrorism while constantly waging war, and failing to prepare peace.

Once again in Syria, we are heading down the wrong path. By contemplating air strikes outside of any UN mandate and without even the beginnings of a political road map for emerging from the crisis, François Hollande has once again forgotten the words of Jaurès: «you cannot eliminate war by waging war».

In Syria, above all, where chaos rules, it is time for France to step up with a priority to bringing the parties to the conflict to sit at the negotiations table, under the auspices of the UN, without excluding Russia and Iran.

To fight against ISIL, we must first cease our hypocrisy. France should take a strong stance with complicit states, shutting down financial flows and providing the necessary means to committed stakeholders seeking to undo the Islamic State. Significant

direct assistance must be supplied to the democratic forces fighting ISIL on the ground. France could be an example by first of all increasing material and political support to Kurdish and Iraqi democratic forces.

But what has France been doing lately? France has been silent on the subject of the massacre of Kurds under Erdogan's administration in Turkey. I appeal for the reconstruction of Kobani and address this message to François Hollande: enough of your complicit silence!

I would like to take this opportunity to extend fraternal greetings to our brave Kurdish comrades.

Solidarity, solidarity, solidarity with our Kurdish brothers and sisters!

Fighting terrorism does not mean shooting at refugees who are fleeing criminal, barbaric regimes and extreme poverty.

The unbearable facts of this humanitarian crisis:
29,000 women, children and men have lost their lives seeking refuge in Europe. European leaders bear the heavy responsibility of their deaths.

Why have they refused to see what is happening? Do they not know that in recent months the Mediterranean has become a cemetery? That every day lifeless bodies wash up on our shores?

They have knowingly abandoned these victims. They are too busy building «fortress Europe», raising walls as in Hungary, trampling the very fundamentals and history of European construction. Their responsibility is boundless.

Finally, the death of a child, the image of his tiny body lifeless on a Turkish beach, stirred citizens' indignation and forced our governments to act.

We all imagined for an instant what the mother and father of Aylan Kurdi must have gone through.

He was from Kobani. It is impossible for me to forget the indifference of the media and politicians to our cries of alarm on behalf of the refugees, which we issued in 2014 after a delegation visited the city in October.

For Communist activists and elected officials, the duty to welcome refugees and respect the right of asylum must always be a priority. We are relieved to see that in Europe and in France the people are becoming more aware of the situation.

We knew that consciousness could be raised, as we saw after the Charlie Hebdo attacks. We have the strength to rise up and defend the brotherhood of humankind.

You have understood me: I believe in France. I do not confuse the pitiful state of current political discourse with the reality of our collective conscience. I know many, many people seek to follow the path of human brotherhood.

To the Mayor of Roanne, I say no, in France we do not sort out refugees based on their religion! Shame on you for suggesting that we differentiate between Catholic, Jewish and Muslim children!

Shame on you Patrick Devedjian, and shame on your racist jokes, on the upscale towns in your district that have shut their doors to refugees!

Shame on you Nadine Morano, as you complained about the availability of transportation for refugees while millions of our compatriots gazed heartbroken at the photo of little Aylan!

Shame on the National Front and the media that continue to report on the insignificant power struggle between father and daughter within the party, trying to prove that the National Front has a new identity.

A new and different National Front ...? As for rejection of refugees, it's six of one and half a dozen of another.

Between Nicolas Bay who suggests that Laurent Fabius should find inspiration in Hungary, Steeve Briois who boasts that cities under National Front administrations will welcome no refugees and who equates refugees with potential terrorists, and Marine Le Pen who suggests that we should send them back to their country of origin ... there is nothing «new» about the National Front. It is fuelled by hatred and violence, as always!

The National Front reeks of racism and stinks of xenophobia.

In France, we must now live up to our duty of solidarity. 24,000 refugees in two years is hardly an achievement. The State must assume its responsibilities alongside hundreds of towns, thousands of citizens and associations of volunteers. 1,000 euro per refugee: that is 24 million euro in two years! In comparison, the sale of a single Rafale fighter jet brings in 94 million euro, tax-exclusive!

This is the world that we must change.

For us, France should incarnate the words of Nelson Mandela :

«Let it never be said by future generations that indifference, cynicism or selfishness made us fail to live up to the ideals of humanism which the Nobel Peace Prize encapsulates. Let the strivings of us all, prove Martin Luther King Jr. to have been correct, when he said that humanity can no longer be tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war.»

I would like to make a proposal. September 21st is International Peace Day. This year, let us organise an extraordinary movement across the country, for solidarity with and support of refugees and migrants, and for peace in the world.

Dear friends, here in Paris just three months from now the Climate Change Conference will be held, a major challenge for humanity.

In 2013, there were 22 million climate refugees. Every second, a person somewhere on the planet moves for reasons related to inclement weather. In 2050, it is estimated that 200 million people will be displaced for environmental reasons.

The Fête de l'Humanité has launched an appeal for the success of COP 21, and for the conference to be a popular event. This international conference should lead to binding decisions and not just good intentions. This requires considerable financial

commitment for human development and the reduction of inequalities generated by global capitalism.

The reduction of greenhouse gasses is absolutely necessary. It would be criminal to prevaricate further and to place the interests of capital and the race for profit above the future of the planet.

You can't put out a fire with a water pistol!

All stakeholders must assume their responsibilities, first of all the major industrialised countries, which must accept an agreement based on principles of fairness, justice and international solidarity.

Major multinational companies must also be held to account. The time for impunity is past! Fooling around with the future of humankind while lining your pocket – past! Exploiting human and natural resources – past!

The Paris agreement should impose drastic legal standards on these multinationals.

It is not time to cobble together some kind of pseudo green capitalism. The task of the 21st Century is to succeed with a new development model.

Our planet is sick and the only valid remedy is more social justice, more environmental justice and peace. The whole process of production and trade needs to be thought out differently, based on the needs of people and the sustainable protection of the planet. The right to energy and healthy food for all, the affirmation of water and other common goods as belonging to humanity must be placed on the top level of fundamental universal principles.

As Pope Francis wrote in the encyclical *Laudato si'*: «The human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together; we cannot adequately combat environmental degradation unless we attend to causes related to human and social degradation.»

We cannot lie to ourselves; we are far from a high-level, binding agreement. As with the refugee situation, only a broad citizen intervention can get states moving. We must broaden and open our perspectives. We must raise a vast citizen movement, grow the debate and use the power of democracy to create another future for our planet.

I would like to invite you all to participate in the world climate march next November 29th to make our slogan heard: CHANGE THE SYSTEM, NOT THE CLIMATE!

In this approach, we must make concrete demands on France for a new, low-carbon energy model; a new development model for agriculture, as farmers demanded this summer; a national plan for thermal renovation of housing; the promotion of public rail service.

I was talking about this yesterday with rail workers: a new battle for rail service is underway as the system is under attack. We hear politicians talking about climate change, but at the same time they are working to liquidate the least polluting mode of transport. We will not stand by and let this happen. With the split-up of the national rail company, the SNCF, with Emmanuel Macron's proposal to replace trains with busses – you can be sure he will continue to ride the TGV while we jam into busses –, with the promotion of road hauling over rail freight, the closure of lines called for in the Duron report, the breakdown of national coherence through the new territorial

reform, the whole of our rail service is in danger.

Public rail service should become a great national cause.

You see, my friends, none of the great challenges of the world, neither peace and development, nor global warming will be overcome if the future is clamped tight in the jaws of austerity and outrageous profits.

Markets and global finance are playing with fire.

Any ambition to fight against unemployment, to develop common goods and public services, to promote high-tech, sustainable industries as well as small and medium-sized businesses, solidarity projects, the «commons», would be impossible within the constraints of capitalist logic. This is why the fight against austerity and general deregulation is the European left's leading struggle.

For the first time this year, an entire nation, the Greek people, and their government, led by Alexis Tsipras, and a party, Syriza, brought this struggle to the EU Council and into the arena of the Eurogroup.

They fought like lions, for months, to see that the Greeks' choice was respected; they organised a referendum where the Greek people said OXI, demonstrating great courage and calm.

As the poet Yannis Ritsos said, «they invited death to share a raki».

Schaüble's Germany tried to break the people's will on the night of July 13th, 2015, by imposing a diktat of austerity on Greece.

The diktat went forward because our joint struggle in Europe alongside the Greek people was not yet powerful enough.

The diktat went forward because France did not play its role.

But the Greek people resisted powerfully, and their fight against austerity did not stop on July 13th. Be assured.

We will fight together, French, Greeks, Spaniards, Italians, Portuguese, Irish, Germans, for our right to dignity, development, democracy, to breach the many dikes that protect financial powers: the budget treaty, the Lisbon Treaty, and the project for a great transatlantic market, going so far as to redefine the foundations of cooperation among European peoples.

Our vision is one of a union of free peoples and nations, sovereign and associated. Each country should be able to renegotiate its contract with the EU. This is also true for the euro zone. Exit from the euro – the solution Merkel would like to impose on the poorest countries – is not an answer. France can and must fight for a radically different euro zone. It is our money. We will not allow them to manage it by pulling out of the euro.

Can democracy win over the markets? Can we impose the respect of popular sovereignty? I am sure that the answer is yes, if the people get involved and if we develop new solidarities, stronger than any yet seen in the world.

We must boost the union of anti-austerity forces in Europe. The fight against the Troïka and the powers of finance requires more than the election of government of the left in a single country. It requires massive mobilisation, a citizens' movement in all countries, at all levels, for the duration.

Do you believe that financiers and European leaders will remain complacent if the Greeks re-elect Alexis Tsipras, who was able to push Europe farther in six months than social democrats were able to do in twenty years?

Do you think their confidence remained steady in the face of the election of Jeremy Corbyn, with 60% of the votes in the first round? That vote revolutionised the English left. I will be meeting with Mr. Corbyn as soon as possible.

Do you think they are unconcerned by the fact that European capitals are governed by alternative political parties – in Barcelona, Madrid, Dublin, and even Thuringe in Germany?

They are well aware, we are raising our heads up high!

And the greater our unity, the greater our solidarity, the more worried they will be. It is time to torment them some more!

It is time to ramp up our battles against austerity and social deregulation.

The government of Hollande, Valls, and Macron is not our government. This government has adopted the agenda of the French Business Confederation (MEDEF), along with policies that will never reverse the unemployment trend.

So we must push back.

On September 19th, the Association of Mayors of France called for a day of action against the reduction of funding for local administrative districts. We will be by their side because all the public policies of our communes and départements are threatened.

We have another urgent issue to address. The liberation of work from big bosses' dictates.

The president has made announcements concerning our labour laws that are quite disturbing.

The government speaks of simplification but in fact it is liquidation. They speak of sanctifying major principles, but their actions would make branch agreements more powerful.

The attack on labour law is another gift made to big business, proof of our government's attachment to the MEDEF.

François Hollande and Pierre Gattaz have said that labour law is «illegible» ... I think, on the contrary, they have read it well and that is they very reason they are attacking it!

Look at the Daimler-Benz / Smart shareholders, they have caught on.

39 hours of work, paid 37 hours, no new hires and dividends on the rise: this is how all the new powers bestowed upon them would be used.

It is time to stop treating workers like fools! The government has spoken of a referendum, but it is in fact blackmail. How about a referendum for 32 hours paid 35 hours, lots of job openings and less money for shareholders?

We will not let this stand! We will defend our labour laws, in the street, with union members next October 8th.

Dear friends, dear comrades, I see that you are seething hot on this topic, so I would like to suggest that we strike now. Here and now. Together! We are going to send a little message to Manuel Valls. I've got my cell phone and my selfie stick. Here is a simple idea: let's take a giant selfie right now, a collective photo in defence of labour laws ... let's say «Hands off our rights!» I'll be happy to send it to Manuel Valls and Emmanuel Macron. Let's do it, stand up and lift your arms up to the sky...

Raise your arms, raise your arms, I am going to turn around and take the photo ... ONE TWO THREE! And there we have it! The world's biggest selfie for social rights!

Bravo you were great. Thank you for your participation. I bet those guys will be surprised.

And now let's get back to serious business. I have a few more things to say.

I want to talk about the regional elections to be held next December 6th and 13th. They are coming up fast and they are very important. The powers of the 13 newly created Regions are enormous. Who will these powers serve: people or finance?

Imagine – and I can assure you that an across-the-board win for the right and far right is a real danger – Valérie Pécresse in Île-de-France, Christian Estrosi or Marion Maréchal-Le Pen in Paca, Laurent Vauquiez in Rhône-Alpes-Auvergne, Marine Le Pen in Nord-Pas de Calais-Picardie !

We want to avoid such a catastrophe at all costs.

How can we avoid it? By jumping into the fray without hesitation, and organising anti-austerity, left lists and supporting them with all our efforts.

Here with us today we have Communist leaders from the 13 regions, and I ask them and you to get going as of tomorrow and have those lists ready.

By the end of the month, we will be battle-ready.

I renew my appeal to all the forces of the Left Front, no more dispersion. I also appeal to EELV party members who are will to be on a joint list. Let mutual respect predominate over hegemonic pretensions.

And I beg you please, please, let's go forward quickly.

With my Communist comrades, we have decided to engage all our forces and I myself will be in Île-de-France because I know how important it is for our people, how

important it is for future political stakes.

Yes I am personally engaged because we must all stand together to face down the right and the far right.

Yes, I am engaged because the people of the left need new hope, and not another defeat in December.

Yes, I am engaged because I deeply love the Île-de-France Region, and all of our Regions, all of that enormous potential that we need to put to the service of the public welfare and equality.

Yes I am engaged because I am convinced that our lists will help us strike a blow and make an electoral breakthrough.

This battle will lead us to 2017. Immense forces in our country are seeking a new way forward to avoid the traps that have been set for us: either Le Pen, or Sarkozy, or a supposed alternative, the Hollande-Valls duo.

No, the left cannot be eliminated. We must come together, unite, and open a new path forward.

It is not yet time to cast roles for the presidential election. It is time to bring the forces of the left together against austerity. Together we can build a shared path to victory.

I would like to be useful in this process of convergence.

Yes, at this time the casting has to yield to the need for unity that the situation requires. It is time for united construction of a new project of solidarity for France that brings us all together.

This is the commitment that I make today in front of you. To be useful, yes, useful for this new unification of a majority of our people.

Dear friends, dear comrades, just this once, to conclude my speech, I would like to talk about love and happiness. Today, the only people we hear speaking on this subject are participants at the MEDEF summer conference!

But it is here, at the Fête de l'Humanité, here where the people of the left come together, that it would be appropriate to speak of love.

I would like to speak of what moves us all at heart, what makes us happy: when justice is done; the strength of brotherhood that sometimes makes us shed a tear; that feeling deep inside when we win a union battle; the shiver that went up our spines in May 2005, at the time of referendum on the EU Constitution, when we realised that ... Yes we could!

I want to talk to you about the strength of commitment, the meaning we give to life, our reasons for fighting.

I am proud that as Communists we carry inside our hearts a certain idea of happiness!

I am proud to be at the head of a party that will soon celebrate its 100th anniversary

... 100 years of a love story with France! A party that includes in its ranks tens of thousands of lovers ... lovers of life, lovers of justice, lovers of equality!

Perhaps you did not know this, but according to a poll, which I take very seriously as national secretary of the French Communist Party, Communist and Left Front activists declared the most love partners in their lives! The great Turkish poet Nazim Hikmet said it best: «I am Communist, I am love from head to toe».

As Communists, we are not only utopians, dreamers, star-chasers We are also realists! We know that the quest for happiness, the conviction that tomorrow must be better than yesterday, this is the quest for meaning that we carry out for the sake of future generations.

Happiness, what is happiness? It is sharing simple pleasures, a good meal among friends, a glass of wine with a comrade, seeing a favourite film, watching a child grow, smelling the fragrance of red roses in full bloom.

But being happy is also living in a society where no one is left by the side of the road; being happy is thinking for 2, for 10, for 1000 others. Being happy is seeing more beauty, seeing greater things, seeing farther ahead. Being happy is joining the poet who says, «one day the colour orange will come».

We are all seeking happiness. Even in these tempestuous times, even when hope vacillates, when the toll of struggle leaves worry lines on our brows, when our enemies laugh to see us mistreated. No, we will never give up on the idea of a better world. Upright we stand, and standing we remain!

In conclusion, I would like to quote the words of the great poet Paul Éluard :

The ration of injustice and the ration of shame
Are truly too bitter
It doesn't take all kinds to make a world it takes
Happiness and nothing else
To be happy you simply must see clearly
And struggle without fail
Our enemies are crazy stupid clumsy
Take advantage of that
Wait not a moment longer, raise your head
Take the planet by storm
We know it is ours, immerse it
We are invincible

Vive la France, vive la République, vive le Parti communiste français, vive nous !

