



**Group of the Progressive Alliance of
Socialists & Democrats
in the European Parliament**

European Parliament
Rue Wiertz 60
B-1047 Bruxelles
www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu
+32 2 284 5716

The President

Brussels, 29 May 2012

Ms Christine Lagarde
Managing Director
International Monetary Fund

Dear Ms Lagarde,

I recently had the pleasure to hear you speak at the dinner in honour of Wolfgang Schäuble in Aachen and I was very impressed by your speech. It was not only excellently formulated but expressed with sympathy and warmth.

But then when I read your recent interview in the Guardian on Greece, I was very disappointed to note that you had expressed yourself with a great deal less sensitivity - as sometimes the German minister of finance has done in the past.

To express a preference of sympathy for poor African children over those in Greece is cynical. To demand from parents of poor children in Greece to pay their taxes is again cynical and demagogic, knowing that it is often the poor classes who pay their taxes and not the rich. And it is the programme "offered" by the very IMF together with the ECB and the EU Commission which, in many cases, is making the poor even poorer.

I have visited Greece three times in the last month and every time people were rightly fed up and annoyed by arrogant remarks from outside.

And especially before the critical elections in June, all of us must be extremely careful with "advice" and judgements from the outside.

Most of the people in Greece and many politicians in the meantime know that drastic reforms are necessary. But they also long for more justice and fairness. To tell them, that they have it better than in Africa is of no help and can only be seen as arrogant. What Greece and its population need is solidarity, help and constructive support for their necessary reforms.

Yours sincerely,

Hannes Swoboda