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PRESS RELEASE

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President Hans-Gert Pöttering calls on EP to provide the political impetus to treat the problem of street homelessness in Europe

Following the launch of the ***cross-party Written Declaration 111 on Ending Street Homelessness in Europe***, the parliament in Strasbourg is this week hosting the photographic exhibition "Cris Silencieux" (Silent Shouts) an uncompromising look at street homelessness, through the lens of French photographer Philippe Gabel.

President Hans-Gert Pöttering opened the exhibition, which will run until Thursday midday, the 21st of February. In his speech, he emphasised that homelessness is a shared problem across the EU and that there is scope to provide political impetus from EU level to treat the problem of street homelessness. "Homelessness is a sad -and unacceptable- reality. No man or woman chooses to live on the street" he said. He also highlighted the crucial role of the European Commission in providing reliable and comparable data at European level on homelessness. He called on fellow MEPs to take action stating: "This is our obligation, as we - as the only European institution with a direct democratic mandate - are the voice of the people."

The five co-signatories of the written declaration also briefly took the floor to welcome the exhibition and initiative on Street Homelessness.

Mary Lou McDonald, GUE/NGL thanked photographer Philippe Gabel, who was present, for his "brutal honesty" and emphasised that homelessness is the "most visible and extreme form of poverty and exclusion and a violation of fundamental rights."

Jacek Protasiewicz EPP-ED recalled the role of the church, "which from the very beginning have been very involved in helping people without a home or a place where they could live safely."

Claude Moraes European Socialists emphasised the need for MEPs to take action on the problem rather than continue to "walk on by people who are homeless and in the street"

Gerard Onesta Les Verts/ALE called on his colleagues to take a simple action towards a large and shared problem. Recalling the declaration 111 he stated "one signature, one person, one roof."

Jean-Marie Beaupuy ALDE highlighted the unacceptable nature of street homelessness and the importance for the parliament, as the democratically elected organ of the European Union, to place pressure for action on the European Commission.

Civil Society Organisations FEANTSA and Homeless Link also took the floor to welcome European action to end Street Homelessness. **Jenny Edwards** from UK organisation homeless link emphasised that effective policy solutions do exist and that much progress has been made in the UK. Where there is political will, there is scope for progress. **Andre Gachet**, Vice President of the European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless, stated that for the organisations working on the ground with homeless people, political leadership and support and a robust political framework are absolutely vital.