Memorial for President Sassoli: “Your fight for democracy will live on”

MEPs honoured the memory of Parliament’s late President David Maria Sassoli in a ceremony during the Plenary in Strasbourg on Monday.

Opening the ceremony, Parliament’s acting President Roberta Metsola said: “Europe has lost a leader, democracy has lost a champion and we have all lost a friend. He always knew how to translate the values he believed in into concrete action.” She highlighted how Sassoli had “fought for Parliament to remain active during the most critical months of the pandemic and enabled us to pass important legislative packages that Europe and its citizens needed.”
“This assembly will honour your work and treasure your legacy,” Mrs Metsola concluded.

Former Italian Prime Minister and MEP Enrico Letta, a close friend of President Sassoli, said in his eulogy that for David Sassoli “Europe is not just directives, institutions and acronyms. No. Europe is first and foremost its people, its souls, its hearts. Just like he kept the doors of this Parliament open, David aimed at opening doors for citizens all over our continent."

“The common thread of all of his battles is clear: the European Union is a Union of values”, Mr Letta said, adding that “David’s fight for democracy, freedom and the rule of law has been an inspiration to all of us”. “We will carry on your work. Your fights will keep being our fights. We will never forget you”, he said.

“David (…) you naturally inspired respect, and that went far beyond your function”, said European Council President Charles Michel. President Michel praised David Sassoli’s “warm, authentic, smiling” personality, which was, he said, firm when necessary. David Sassoli “was a political leader and a proud European”, President Michel continued. He also praised David Sassoli’s ideals of social justice and solidarity, which were at the centre of his political identity.

The President of the French Republic and President-in-Office of the Council of the EU, Emmanuel Macron, saluted “a man of rare kindness, whose smile, vision and ideals were wide enough for a continent”. He emphasised “the heart and ambition” that David Sassoli showed throughout the pandemic, during which he presented to Europe “friendship and exemplary behaviour” through his actions at the head of the Parliament. He was “both an organiser and a peacemaker” in the hemicycle, as “he confronted ideas, never people”, President Macron said.

**Political groups’ leaders**

After Mr Macron’s intervention, the representatives of Parliament’s political groups took the floor. They praised David Sassoli for being a man of great integrity, decency and kindness, always willing and able to find compromise and bridge divisions, while at the same time steering Parliament with great foresight, determination and competence through difficult times.

The leader of the S&D group, of which Sassoli was a member, Iratxe García Pérez (ES) said: “David Sassoli was a good man, committed, a passionate European champion, capable of dialogue and at the same time of remaining firm in his principles of freedom, democracy and solidarity. The best tribute we can pay him is to continue his legacy: build a social Europe, and a migration policy that puts people at its centre”.

She was followed by Manfred Weber (EPP, DE), Dacian Cioloş (Renew, RO), Ska Keller (Greens/EFA, DE), Marco Zanni (ID, IT), Raffaele Fitto ECR, IT) and Martin Schirdewan (The Left, DE).

President Sassoli’s family, including his wife and children, attended the ceremony. Several high-profile public figures, including those holding the highest political offices in EU countries and institutions, were also present. Among them were Prime Minister of Italy Mario Draghi, Several
EU national parliaments’ speakers also attended.

At the beginning of the ceremony, a short video titled “David Maria Sassoli, President of the European Parliament” was projected in the Chamber.

You can re-watch the full ceremony here.

Further information

EP Multimedia centre: video and photos of President Sassoli


Contacts

Neil CORLETT
Head of the Press Unit
(+32) 2 28 42077 (BXL)
(+33) 3 881 74167 (STR)
(+32) 470 89 16 63
neil.corlett@europarl.europa.eu

Federico DE GIROLAMO
Press Officer / Editorial Coordinator
(+32) 2 28 31389 (BXL)
(+33) 3 881 72850 (STR)
(+32) 498 98 35 91
federico.degirolamo@europarl.europa.eu