

Speech by President Hugo Chávez, at the opening of XII G-15 Summit

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HIS EXCELLENCY PÉRCIVAL JAMES PATTERSON, PRIME MINISTER OF JAMAICA.

HIS EXCELLENCY RÓBERT GABRIEL MUGÁBE, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZIMBABWE.

HIS EXCELLENCY AMBASSADOR NASSIR ABDULAZIZ AL_NASSER, PRESIDENT OF THE GROUP OF 77.

DISTINGUISHED HEADS OF THE DELEGATIONS AND HIGH OFFICERS OF ALGERIA, COLOMBIA, CHILE, EGYPT, INDIA, INDONESIA, KENYA, MALAYSIA, MEXICO, NIGERIA, PERU, SENEGAL AND SRI LANKA.

THEIR EXCELLENCIES, FOREIGN AFFAIRS MINISTERS OF THE GROUP OF 15.

HIS EXCELLENCY RÚBENS RICÚPERO, SECRETARY GENERAL TO THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT (UNCTAD).

THEIR EXCELLENCIES THE HEADS OF DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS AND HONORABLE REPRESENTATIVES OF INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES CREDITED BEFORE THE VENEZUELAN GOVERNMENT.

DISTINGUISHED JOURNALISTS, PHOTOGRAPHERS AND CAMERAMEN.

FELLOW VENEZUELAN.... LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

Welcome to this land washed by the waters of the Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean Sea, crossed by the magnificent Orinoco River. A land crowned by the perpetual snow of the Andean mountains....!

A land overwhelmed by the never-ending magic of the Amazon forest and its millenary chants...!

Welcome to Venezuela, the land where a patriotic people has taken over again the banners of Simon Bolivar, its Libertador, whose name is well known beyond these frontiers!

As Pablo Neruda said in his “Chant to Bolivar”:

Our Father thou art in Heaven,

in water, in air
 in all our silent and broad latitude
 everything bears your name, Father in our dwelling:
 your name raises sweetness in sugar cane
 Bolivar tin has a Bolivar gleam
 the Bolívar bird flies over the Bolivar volcano
 the potato, the saltpeter, the special shadows,
 the brooks, the phosphorous stone veins
 everything comes from your extinguished life
 your legacy was rivers, plains, bell towers
 your legacy is our daily bread, oh Father.

Yes, ladies and gentlemen: Bolivar, another “Quixote but not mad” (as Napoleon Bonaparte had already called Francisco de Miranda, the universal man from Caracas), who on this very same land of South America tried to unite the Rising Republics in a single, strong and free Republic.

In his letter to Jamaica in 1815, Bolivar said talking about the Panama isthmus and his idea of convening there a Amphictyonic Congress:

“I wish one day we would have the opportunity to install there an august congress with the representatives of the Republics, Kingdoms and Empires to debate and discuss the highest interests of Peace and War with the countries of the other three parts of the world.”

Bolivar reveals himself as an anti-imperialist leader, in the same historic perspective that 140 years after that insightful letter at Kingston materialized in the Bandung Conference in April 1955. Inspired by Nerhu, Tito y Nasser, a group of important leaders gathered at this conference to face great challenges and expressed their wish of not being involved in the East-West conflict and rather work together toward national development. This was the first key milestone: the first Afro-Asian conference, the immediate precedent of the Non-Aligned Countries that gathered 29 Heads of State and from which the “Conscience of the South” was born.

Two events of great political significance occurred in the 60’s: the creation of the Non-Aligned Movement in Belgrade in 1961 and the Group of the 77 in 1964: Two milestones and a clear historic trend: the need of the self-awareness of the South and of acting together in a world reality characterized by imbalance and unequal exchange.

In the 70’s a proposal, arising from the IV Summit of Heads of State of the Non-Aligned Countries in Algiers in 1973, becomes important: the need to create a new international economic order. In 1974 the UN Assembly ratified this proposal, which maintains full effectiveness, but ended up becoming a mere historical reference.

Two events that were very important for the struggles in the South occurred during the 80’s: the creation of the Commission of the South in Kuala Lumpur in 1987 under the leadership of Julius Nyerere, the unforgettable fighter of Tanzania and the world.

Two years later, in September 1989, the Group of the 15 is born within the framework of the meeting of the Non-Aligned Countries, with the purpose of strengthening the South-South cooperation.

In 1990, the South-Commission submitted its strategic proposal: “A Challenge for the South”. And later on... later on came the Flood with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the implosion of the Soviet Union; unipolarity appears and the “happy 90’s” arrived, as Joseph Stiglitz said.

All those struggles, ideas and proposals sunk in the Neo-liberal Flood and the world began to witness the so-called “end of History” and the triumphant chant of the Neo-liberal Globalization, which today, besides an objective reality, is a weapon of manipulation intended to force us to passiveness faced to an Economic World Order that excludes our South countries and condemns them to the never-ending role of producers of wealth and recipients of leftovers.

Never before had the world such a tremendous scientific-technical potential, such a capacity to generate wealth and well-being. Authentic technological wonders that have made any place in the world to be always close with regard to distances and communications and have not been capable of bringing well-being for everybody, but only for a meager 15% living in the countries of the North.

Globalization has not brought the so-called interdependence, but an increase in dependency. Instead of wealth globalization, there is poverty wide spreading. Development has not become general, or been shared. To the contrary, the abyss between North and South is now so huge, that the unsustainability of the current economic order and the blindness of the people who try to justify continuing to enjoy opulence and waste, are evident.

The face of this world economic order of globalization with a neo-liberal sign is not only Internet, virtual reality or the exploration of the space.

This face can also be seen, and with a greater dramatic character in the countries of the South, in the 790 millions of people who are starving, 800 millions of illiterate adults, 654 millions of human beings who live today in the south and who will not grow older than 40 years of age. This is the harsh and hard face of the work economic order dominated by the Neoliberalism and seen every year in the south, the death of over 11 millions of boys and girls below 5 years of age caused by illnesses that are practically always preventable and curable and who die at the appalling rate of over 30 thousand every day, 21 every minute, 10 each 30 seconds. In the South, the proportion of children suffering of malnutrition reaches up to 50% in quite a few countries, while according to the FAO, a child who lives in the First World will consume throughout his or her life, the equivalent to what 50 children consume in an underdeveloped country.

The great possibilities that a globalization of solidarity and true cooperation could bring to all people in the world through the scientific-technical wonders, has been reduced by the neo-liberal model to this grotesque caricature full of exploitation and social injustice.

Our countries of the South were repeated a thousand times that the sole and true “science” capable of ensuring development and well-being for everybody, without exception, was synthesized in leaving the markets operate without regulation, privatizing everything and creating the conditions for transnational capital investment, and banning the State from intervening the economy.

Almost the magic and wonderful philosopher’s stone!!

Neoliberal thought and politics were created in the North to serve their interests, but it should be highlighted that they have never been truly applied there, but they have been spread throughout the South in the past two decades and reached the disastrous category of a single thought.

Through the application of the sole thought, the world economy as a whole grew less than in the three decades between 1945 and 1975, when the Keynesian theories promoting market regulation through State intervention were applied. The gap separating the North and the South continued to grow, not only with regard to economic indicators, but also in the strategic sector of access to knowledge, from which the fundamental possibility of integral development in our times arises.

The countries of the North with 15% of the world population count with over 85% of Internet users and

control 97% of the patents. These countries have an average of over 10 years of schooling, while in the countries of the South schooling hardly reaches 3.7 years and in many countries is even lower.

The tragedy of underdevelopment and poverty in Africa, which historic roots lay in colonialism and the slavery of millions of its children, is now reinforced by the neoliberalism from the North. In this region, the rate of infant mortality in children under 1 year of age is 107 per each thousand children born alive, while in the develop countries this rate is 6 per each thousand children born alive; also, life expectancy is 48 years, thirty years less than in countries of the North.

In Asia, economic growth in some countries has been remarkable, but the region, as a whole, still presents a delay with regard to the North in basic economic and social development aspects.

We are, dear friends, in Latin America, the favorite scenario of the neo-liberal model in the past decades. Here, neoliberalism reached the status of a dogma and was applied with greatest severity.

Its catastrophic results can be easily seen and are the explanation for the growing and uncontrollable social protest that the poor people and the excluded people of Latin America have been expressing, every day more vigorously, for some years now, claiming their right to life, to education, to health, to culture, to a decent living as human beings.

Dear friends:

I saw with my own eyes, a day like today but exactly 15 years ago, the 27 of February 1989, when an intense day of protest broke out on the streets of Caracas against the neo-liberal package of the International Monetary Fund and ended in a real massacre known as “The Caracazo”.

The neo-liberal model promised Latin Americans greater economic growth, but during the neo-liberal years growth has not even reached half the growth achieved in the 1945-1975 period with different politics.

The model recommended the most strict financial liberalization and exchange freedom to achieve a greater influx of foreign capitals and greater stability. But in neo-liberal years the financial crises have been more intense and frequent than ever before, the external regional debts non-existent at the end of the Second World War amounts today to 750 billion dollars, the per capita highest debt in the world and in several countries is equal to more than half the GDP. Only between 1990 and the year 2002, Latin America made external debt payments amounting to 1 trillion 528 billions of dollars, which duplicates the amount of the current debt and represented an annual average payment of 118 billions. That is, we pay the debt every 6.3 years, but this evil burden continues to be there, unchanging and inextinguishable.

;;It is a never-ending debt!!

Obviously, this debt has exceeded the normal and reasonable payment commitments by any debtor and has turned into an instrument to undercapitalize our countries additionally to the imposition of socially adverse measures that subsequently generate powerful politically destabilizing factors for the governments that insist in their implementation.

We were asked to be ultraliberal in trade and to lift any barrier, which may obstruct the imports coming from the North, but the oral champions of free trade actually are the champions in the praxis of protectionism. The North spends 1 billion dollars a day in practicing what has been banned from doing, that is, subsidizing inefficient products.

I want to tell you – and this is a true and verifiable data – that each cow grazing in the European Union receives in its four stomachs 2.20 dollars a day in subsidies, thus having a better situation than 2.5 billion poor people in the South who hardly survive with an income less than 2 dollars a day.

With the FTAA, the government of the United States wants us to reach a zero tariff situation in their benefit and wants us to give away our markets, our oil, our water resources and biodiversity, in addition to our sovereignty, whereas walls of subsidies for agriculture keep access closed to the market of that country. It is a peculiar way of relieving the huge commercial deficit of the United States, to do exactly the contrary to what they present as a sacred principle in economic policy.

Neoliberalism promised Latin American people that if they accepted the demands of the multinational capital, investments would overflow the region. Indeed, the incoming capital increased. A portion to buy state-owned companies sometimes at bargain prices, another portion was speculative capital to seize the opportunities involved in the financial liberalization environment.

The neo-liberal model promised that after a painful adjustment period necessary to deprive the State of its regulatory power over economy and liberalize trade and finance, wealth would spread over Latin America and the long-lasting history of poverty and underdevelopment would be left behind. But the painful and temporary adjustment became permanent and appears to become everlasting. The results cannot be concealed.

Taking 1980 as the conventional year of the commencement of the neo-liberal cycle, by that time around 35 percent of the Latin American population were poor. Two decades thereafter, 44 percent of Latin American men and women are poor. Poverty is particularly cruel to children. It is a sad reality that in Latin America most of the poor people are children and most children are poor. In the late 90s', the Economic Commission for Latin America reported that 58 percent of children under 5 were poor, as well as 57% of children with ages ranging from 6 to 12.

Poverty among children and teenagers tends to reinforce and perpetuate inequalities of access to education, as shown by a survey conducted by the Inter-American Development Bank on 15 countries where householders in 10 percent of the population with the highest income had an average schooling of 11 years, whereas among householders in 30 percent of the lowest income population such average was 4 years.

Neoliberalism promised wealth. And poverty has spread, thus making of Latin America the most unequal region over the world in terms of income distribution. In the region, the wealthiest 10 percent of the population –those who are satisfied with neoliberalism and feel enthusiastic about the FTAA- receive nearly 50 percent of the total income, where the poorest 10 percent – those who never appear in high class society chronicles of the oligarchic mass media – barely receive 1.5 percent of such total income.

This exploitation model has turned Latin America and the Caribbean into a social bomb ready to explode, should anti-development, unemployment and poverty keep increasing.

Even though the social struggles are growing sharp and even some governments have been overthrown by uprisings, we are told by the North that the neo-liberal reform has not yielded good results because it has not been implemented in full.

So, they now intend to recommend the formula of suicide. But we know, brothers and sisters, that countries do not commit suicide. The people of our countries awake, stand up and fight!

As a conclusion, their Excellencies, because of its injustice and inequality, the economic and social order of neo-liberal globalization appears to be a dead-end street for the South.

Therefore, the passive acceptance of the excluding rules imposed by this economic and social order cannot be the behavior to be exercised by the Heads of State and Government who have the highest responsibility before our peoples.

The history of our countries does not admit any doubt – passivity and grieving are useless, instead, the joined

and firm action is the sole conduct enabling the South to rise from its sad role of exploited and humiliated rearguard.

Thanks to the heroic struggle against colonialism, the developing countries broke the economic and social order condemning them to the condition of exploited colonies. Colonialism was not defeated by the accumulations of tears of sorrow or by the repentance of colonialists, but for centuries of heroic fights for independence and sovereignty in which the resistance, tenacity and sacrifice of our peoples worked wonders.

Here, in South America, this year we are precisely commemorating 180 years of the heroic deeds of Ayacucho battle, where people joined and became a liberating army after almost 20 years of revolutionary wars under the bright leadership of José de San Martín, Bernardo O'Higgins, José Inacio Abreu e Lima, Simón Bolívar and Antonio José de Sucre, sending away the Spanish empire hitherto extended from the warm Caribbean beaches to the cold lands of Patagonia, thus ending 300 years of colonialism.

Today, vis-à-vis the obvious failure of neoliberalism and the great threat that the International Economic Order represents for our countries, it is necessary to retake the Spirit of the South.

That is where this Summit in Caracas is heading for.

I propose to re-launch the G-15 as a South Integration Movement rather than a group. A movement for the promotion of all possible trends, who walks towards the Non-aligned Movement, the Group of 77, China... The entire whole South!!

I propose that we retake the proposals of the 1990 South Commission:

Why not focus our attention and our political actions to the proposals for granting several thousands of the "Grants of the South" per year to students from underdeveloped countries to continue studies in the South; or multiplying cooperation in health to decrease infant mortality, provide basic medical care, fight AIDS and many other actions that would only be possible if we would foster them with the solidarity necessary to ease the dark panorama of life in the South and thus face the expensive and ineffective dependency from the North?

Why not create the Debtors Fund as an elemental defense tool to have consultations and coordinate collective action policies, taking into account the full operation of the creditors forum structured by different bodies to protect their interests?

Why not advance the system of trade preferences among developing countries that only exists symbolically, whereas the protectionism of the North expels our countries from the markets?

Why not promote the compensation trade and investment flows within the South instead of competing in a suicidal fashion among us offering concessions to the multinationals of the North?

Why not establish the University of the South?

Why not create the Bank of the South?

These and other proposals retain their value and await for our political will to become true.

But finally, dear friends, I would like to mention in particular a proposal, which, in my opinion, has great significance within this set of proposals:

In the South we are victims of the media monopoly of the North, which acts as a power system responsible for disseminating in our countries and planting in the minds of our citizens, information, values and

consumption patterns that are basically alien to our realities and that have turned themselves into the most powerful and effective tool of domination. Never is domination more perfect than when the dominated people think like the dominators do.

To face and begin to change this reality, I dare to propose the creation of a TV channel that could be seen throughout the world showing information and pictures from the South. This would be the first and fundamental step to crush the media monopoly.

In a very short time this TV channel of the South could broadcast throughout the world our own values, our own roots and tell the people in the world in the words of the great poet Mario Benedetti, a man from the deep South, Uruguay, where the La Plata River opens so much that it looks like a silver sea, and washes my dear Buenos Aires and bluish Montevideo:

“THE SOUTH ALSO EXISTS”

With its French horn
and its Swedish academy
its American sauce
and its English wrenches
with all its missiles
and its encyclopedias
its stars war
and its opulent viciousness
with all its laurels
the North commands,
but down here
close to the roots
is where memory
no remembrance omits
and there are who undies
and who unives
and thus, all together
work wonders
be it known:
the South also exists.

Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you very much

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