

CELAC Summit will be Positive for Regional Integration

HAVANA, Cuba.- (acn) The 2nd Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, take place in Havana later this month, will be very positive for regional integration, said Cuban deputy foreign minister Abelardo Moreno.

The Community promotes unity amid diversity and I'm convinced that the Summit will yield very positive results for Latin America and the Caribbean and for the common goal of strengthening Latin American integration as honor of the 200-year legacy of the independence heroes of our region, said Moreno.

In statements to local television the government official said that the pro-tempore mandate of Cuba in the community met its objectives. He noted that Cuba focused on both political activity and the holding of different forums.

Moreno referred to the CELAC education ministers' forum in Havana last year, which particularly focused on the need to eradicate illiteracy in the region, as well as the meeting of culture ministers with the bloc, who defined the position of Latin America that culture is crucial for development.

He also mentioned other ministerial meetings under the Cuban pro-tempore presidency, such as the forums of ministers of finance, the environment and energy. The latter one was very important since it looked at improving the energy systems of the countries of the region.

On January 28 and 29, the heads of state and government of the community's 33 member nations will meet in Havana.

CELAC Heads of State will Begin Arriving in Havana on January 27

HAVANA, Cuba.- (acn) The heads of state and government who will take part at the 2nd Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States in Havana will begin arriving here on January 27.

According to the event's agenda, the inaugural session will take place in morning hours, January 28, at Pabexpo exhibit ground, which will host all activities of the summit.

The regional meeting will focus on the problems currently pending on the region, such as hunger, poverty and social inequalities and at the same time it will consider strategies to deal with such realities.

Prior to the summit, national experts and foreign ministers will hold their own gatherings

January 25-27. Meanwhile, the first ladies attending the regional forum will meet an agenda that will include tours of places of social, cultural and scientific interest. They will visit the Immunological Assay Center, the Old Section of Havana, a school for autistic children and Cuban Arts Gallery at the Fine Arts Museum.

The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, CELAC, was set up in 2011 in Caracas. The bloc has been considered as the most important institutional event in the region. The first summit of the community took place in 2012 in Santiago de Chile, in which Cuba assumed the pro-tempore presidency, to be passed over to Costa Rica in the upcoming forum.

Russian Foreign Minister emphasizes universal role of CELAC

HAVANA, Cuba.- (acn) Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov highlighted in Moscow today the importance of relations with Latin America and marked the weight of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) as agglutination factor for the continent.

Lavrov told Prensa Latina news agency that CELAC is the first universal organization in the region, which brings together all Latin American nations.

We consider our relations with Latin America and the Caribbean important, and have done much in the practical and useful level in recent years, the head of Russian diplomacy explained in responding at the annual press conference with domestic and foreign media.

He foresaw great prospects for Latin American integration which harmonizes the process of complementarity of all regional states. A necessary process for all Latin American countries, he said.

We are interested in working in that format, bilaterally, but also with other regional multilateral structures, and I think it may be of interest to other members, Lavrov added.

He evoked the visit to Moscow by his Cuban counterpart, Bruno Rodriguez, last May, occasion when consultations were very helpful, he stressed.

Asked about the creation of a permanent consultation mechanism with the CELAC, Lavrov recalled that during the Troika meeting held in Moscow that initiative was analyzed.

I hope that in the upcoming summit in Havana a decision is taken, and we start the work within that mechanism, the Minister said.

Lavrov spoke also of the Russian ties with other regional organizations such as Unasur and the Southern Common Market, as endorsed Moscow's willingness to prepare a memorandum of interaction with the Central American Integration System (SICA).

He characterized Latin America not only as an attractive region for foreign partners, but also a growing area with strong aspirations for independence, not very common today in international affairs, he said.

Commission in London to Strengthen Call by Cuban Antiterrorists

Havana, Jan 21 (Prensa Latina) The International Commission taking place in London on March 7-8 will strengthen the call of the release for the Cuban antiterrorist fighters unjustly condemned in the United States, Belgian activist Katrien Demuynck said today.

This is a meeting that due to its dimension and massive support not only of figures but also of great audience can be an important impact, although at the same time is an enormous challenge, said Demuynck, European coordinator of the campaign for the freedom of Gerardo Hernandez, Ramon Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, and Fernando Gonzalez.

We start saying that they have spent 15 years of unjust imprisonment and we have the dissatisfaction we have done a lot in the world campaign, but it is not enough to achieve their release, she noted.

Rene Gonzalez, condemned along with them, is already in Cuba, because he complied integrally with his prison sentence, the activist told Prensa Latina at a telephone conversation.

The Commission will be led by a prestigious international jury, made up of, among others, Indian Supreme Court's former president Yogesh Kumar Sabharwal, South African Constitutional Court's former judge Zakeria Mohammed Yacoob, and Supreme Justice Court president in France, Philippe Texier.

"The presence of distinguish U.S. writer Alice Walker, winner of Pulitzer award for her book "El color purpura" (The Color Purple), and former U.S. attorney general Ramsey Clark" have been also confirmed.

Also on the list are Rene (Gonzalez), other relatives of the Five, as the group is internationally known, and witnesses from terrorism against Cuba, said Demuyne. She founded in Belgium the Cuba Socialista Initiative and the Che Presente Event.

The International Commission of Inquiry will be divided in five sessions that will be held at the Law Society in London.

The two first sessions will be dedicated to the activities of the Five in Miami, to prevent terrorist attacks against Cuba, and U.S. organized terrorism against the island."

A third session "will deal with right, since the legal viewpoint, to defend the island against terrorism, while the fourth session will deepen in the trial: the violation of the right to a just trial, the presumption of innocence, the right to a biased and independent court, among other aspects."

Organizing an International Commission of Inquiry "emerged from an exchange between lawyer Jan Fermon, leader of Progress Lawyers Network in Belgium and vice president of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers, and Olga Salanueva, spouse of Rene, in September 2012," she recalled.

London to Host International Commission Hearing for the Cuban Five

HAVANA, Cuba.- The International London Commission on the Cuban anti-terrorist fighters, who were given unfair prison sentences in the United States, will have a significant impact on the US administration in favor of their release, according to organizers of the event.

The Commission, to take place March 7 and 8, will hear the testimonies by key witnesses from Cuba and other countries on the cause of Gerardo Hernández, Fernando González, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero and René González. They were arrested in 1998, in the US city of

Miami, after they monitored violent organizations that planned terrorist actions against Cuba.

Only Rene Gonzalez has returned to the island after he served his prison sentence and renounced his US citizenship. Gonzalez is expected to attend the Commission session to offer his testimony of the Cuban Five case, which was manipulated in biased Miami court that gave the Cubans extremely long sentences.

The president of the UK-Cuba Solidarity Campaign Rob Miller said that the Commission will be attended by renowned world personalities, such as US writer and Pulitzer Laureate Alice Walker, actors Martin Sheen from the United States and Emma Thompson from the UK.

Also on the list of guests is lawyer Martin Garbos, who has been part of the defense of the Cuban Five, along other lawyers from around the world who will make up the Commission that will hear the testimonies, such as the expresident of India's Supreme Court Yogesh Kumar Sabharwal, ex-magistrate of South Africa's Constitutional Court Zakeira Mohammed Yacob, and former president of the Supreme Court of France Phillippe Texier.

For Miller, the Commission will be one of the most significant events in the long record of the Cuban Five case. He said that thanks to the support of many personalities from different countries, the conclusions of the commission will have a strong impact on President Barack Obama, who can use his constitutional powers to put an end to the injustice being committed against the Cubans.

The commission will hold sessions at London's Law Society on the initiative of the campaign known as Voices for the Five. As part of the event a music concert will be launched at the Barbican Hall in London with the participation of renowned Cuban singer Eliades Ochoa and other musicians from several countries.

Campaign for the Five in Washington Announces Agenda

HAVANA, Cuba.- (acn) The International Committee for the Freedom of the Cuban Five announced in Washington the agenda of activities for the 3rd Solidarity Campaign with the anti-terrorist fighters, to take place June 4- 11.

On June 7, a peaceful demonstration will take place in front of the White House to urge President Barack Obama to immediately release Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero and Fernando González, who are serving unfair sentences in US Federal prisons.

The campaign, known as Five Days for the Five, includes lectures and workshops on the case, lobbying actions at the US Congress, visits to media outlets, meetings with lawyers, intellectuals, religious and union leaders, as well as cultural events with the attendance of people from different parts of the world.

The Committee recalled that major actions during the international campaign this year also includes the Investigation Commission on the case slated to take place March 7 and 8 in London. This commission will hear testimonies of 20 key witnesses from Cuba and other nations, including Rene Gonzalez, one of the Cuban Five, who is already back home after he served an unfair sentence in the United States.

The Cuban Five, as the anti-terrorist fighters are known around the world were arrested and given unfair prison sentences in the U.S. after they monitored Miami-based violent organizations that planned terrorist actions against Cuba.

In May 2005, a UN panel ruled that the arrest of the Cuban Five was arbitrary and it asked the US administration to put an end to the injustice committed against the anti-terrorist fighters.

Salvadorians Demand Release of Cuban Antiterrorists

San Salvador, Jan 20 (Prensa Latina) Members of the Salvadorian Coordinating Committee of Solidarity with Cuba (CSSC) marched in caravan through important sites of this city demanding the immediate release of the Cuban antiterrorist fighters unjustly condemned in the United States since 1998.

Examples of support and the demands for the immediate release of Gerardo Hernandez, Fernando Gonzalez, Antonio Guerrero, Ramon Labañino, who along with Rene Gonzalez are part of the group internationally known as the Cuban Five, started at the University of El Salvador, and were repeated in different areas of the Salvadorian capital.

The caravan began its activities of protests at La Puerta del Diablo, a mountain range more than 1.30 meter high and from where the voice of the Salvadorians was heard asking freedom for the Cuban antiterrorists.

Anthony Ernesto Hernandez, former guerrilla fighter of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN), talked the demonstrators at the top of the hill, where the solidarity with the Cuban people and especially with the cause of Gerardo, Fernando, Antonio, Ramon and Rene was reaffirmed.

The caravan continued its march towards the entrance of the U.S. embassy in San Salvador, where Raul Martinez, on behalf of the CSSC, sent a message to the President of that northern nation, Barack Obama.

German Sailing Ships on Exploratory Journey to Cuba

Pinar del Río, Cuba, Jan 21 (Prensa Latina) Two German sailing ships carrying students and professors will arrive at Cuba's westernmost province next February and March, as part of their exploratory journey across several nations, organizers announced today.

The ship Thor Heyerdahl will arrive on February 2 at the Diving Center María La Gorda, where members of the expedition will start a 200 km tour on bikes until they reach the city, Yuliet Morejón from the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples told Prensa Latina.

Then they will visit the Vocational Exact Sciences School Federico Engels to participate in sports and artistic activities, as well as to receive history, geography and typical Cuban dances lessons.

The sailors will also visit Viñales, a farmers cooperative and will learn about tobacco growing in Pinar del Río.

The High Seas High School project has combined traditional school lessons and seafaring tasks for more than 20 years and has welcomed around 20 thousand teenagers and young adults. The sailing ship comes to Cuba every year with about 30 students interested in knowing about foreign countries and different cultures.

Cuban-Venezuelan Refinery Begins 2014 Operations

Cienfuegos, Cuba, Jan 21 (Prensa Latina) The Cuban-Venezuelan oil refining firm Cuvenpetrol S.A. operating in this south-central Cuban city since 2007 will begin production today corresponding to the current year, local media are reporting.

After completing last week what experts called a 50 day opportunistic stop, after the planned refining of 19.7 million barrels of oil for 2013 was completed, the plant is prepared to begin producing slightly more than 18 million barrels by December.

Executives for the bi-national company stated that this year's objectives include decreasing the maximum loss levels at the factory, getting better performance from the so-called clear products, as well as reducing consumption of electricity, water, chemical reagents, oils, and lubricants.

Japanese Communist Congress Condemns Blockade on Cuba

Tokyo.- The 26th Congress of the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) described as illegal and prolonged the more than 50 year U.S blockade on Cuba, saying that measure has prevented that country to reach a greater development.

The four-day meeting taking place in the coast city of Atami, some 100 kilometers of this capital, includes the participation of 850 delegates from all parts of the world, who will elect the new leadership of the organization.

In the resolution of the 26th JCP Congress' central report, presented by its President Kazuo Shii, the Japanese Communists condemned these U.S. punitive measures against Cuba, and praised the creation of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC).

About this matter, Shii said this organization contribute to an international order of peace, based on the principles included in the UN Charter, such as mutual respect, international right, sovereignty, pluralism, the States' equality.

The CELAC supports the struggle to renounce the use of force and promote social inclusion, solidarity, and integration.

The report deals with the battle for a world free of nuclear weapons, the struggle for a just international economic order, the concern about the global warming, and the persistence of the U.S. military hegemony.

Cuban ambassador to Japan, Marcos Rodriguez, attended the opening session of the Congress as a guest, and delivered a message of greetings from the Cuban Communist Party, to which President Shii thanked. (PL)

New Film Reveals Mistreatment of Prisoners at US Gtmo Naval Base

HAVANA, Cuba, Jan 20 (acn) The 33rd Sundance Independent Movie Festival, held in Lake City, the United States, premiered a film that reveals the abuses committed against the prisoners held at the prison camp set up at the US Naval Based in Guantanamo, a US-occupied Cuban territory.

Entitled Camp X-Rey the film is impressing and updated, said Kristen Stewart, an actress who interprets army soldier Amy Cole. She noted that the movie mirrors the cruelty and humiliation to which the alleged suspects of terrorism are submitted at the prison camp.

The film features innocent prisoners, such as Ali Amir, interpreted by Peyman Moadi, and the new generation of women soldiers, a role played by Stewart as a guard meeting its service at the prison.

Movie maker Peter Sattler said that the screenplay of his first film was inspired in a documentary in which a guard and a prisoner talked about some books. Sattler worked as graphic designer in films such as Star Trek, and he also directed a short length film entitled Newton.

Chile, Argentina and Colombia are representing Latin America at the Sundance Film Festival, which was founded by renowned US director and actor Robert Redford. The event is showing a total of 117 movies till January 26.

Cuba Delivers Idle Lands in Usufruct

Havana.- (Prensa Latina) Cuba makes progresses today in delivering idle lands in usufruct with the granting since 2008 of more than 1,580,000 hectares and the updating of the legislation referring to the issue, as part of the improvement of the economic model.

Within the bounds of this process, the Cuban legislation allowed to increase until 67.10 hectares (five acres) the area granted to individuals who were the owners and/or usufructuaries of land, had them in full production and complied with legal and contractual obligations.

As a requirement, the island also established that those lands should be linked to state farms with legal status, Basic Units of Cooperative Production (UBPC), and Agricultural Production Cooperatives (CPA).

The possibility to expand the areas to individuals, possessing land in property or usufruct linked to Credit Union Services (CCS), is excluded from that law.

As of such decrees, the country also allows the expansion of lands until 67.10 hectares to individuals linked to the CCS.

Cuba has a Large Special Education Network

HAVANA, Cuba.- (acn) Cuba has developed system of special schools for the past 52 years to support families with children requiring particular education programs.

At present, the island counts on 400 special schools, whose total registration includes 40 thousand students.

Nearly 16 thousand professionals are in charge of the education of the children, as they take specialized training to meet the educational needs of the kids and help those who get the necessary skills join general education. Some make it, some do not, it all depends on the degree of difficulties the children have and their abilities to depend on themselves.

The schools include mentally retarded students and others with psychic development problems, autism, language difficulties, the visually impaired and the blind, the hearing impaired and the deaf, and other physical and limitations.

In the case of students with conditions that limit them from attending special schools, traveling professionals are in charge of giving them the lessons at home.

Website to promote Indian culture in Cuba

HAVANA, Cuba, (acn) A new website called Kamala, was created in order to promote the culture and literature of India, and its presence in Cuba.

Sponsored by the Asia House, the website can be found at <http://www.kamala.comlu.com/> and contains sections dedicated to science, cooking, religion and tours through the Asian nation, among other sections.

In its editorial, Kamala-Sanskrit for lotus flower, promises to address the relations between the two peoples and comment on places of interest in Havana relevant to this ancient culture.

Let's talk about India, from North to South, from East to West, as a whole, of its past, present

and future, in its form and in its language, the site publishes.

The portal will be presented on the 28th as part of the celebrations on the island for the 64 anniversary of the establishment of the Republic of India, which includes a day of festivities, which will run from the 23th to the 30th of this month.

Universities of Mexico and Cuba Sign Cooperation Agreement

HAVANA, Cuba.- The signing of an agreement between the universities of the Mexican state of Campeche and Havana, Cuba , aims to develop academic plans and joint research in the disciplines and topics of mutual interest.

According to a press release from the Cuban Embassy in Mexico, the territorial governor, Fernando Ortega, said during the ceremony that the relationship between Campeche and Cuban has always been framed by the bonds of affection, solidarity, cooperation, cordiality and friendship.

The document endorsed by the two schools also provides for the exchange of specialists and graduate students to develop programs, conferences and studies, among others, reported Prensa Latina news agency.

For his part, the rector of the University of Havana Gustavo Cobreiro said that the relationship with the Mexican university from today acquire new impetus , for bridges that have been established will advance with the support of teachers , students and governments.

Prior to the signing of the text between the two institutions, the governor laid a wreath at the bust of José Martí on the waterfront promenade in the city of Campeche, in the presence of members of the Cuban community.

Cuba Present at Spanish Tourism Fair

HAVANA, Cuba.- (acn) Cuba will take part in the 34th edition of FITUR 2014, the International Tourism Fair to be held in Madrid, Spain, on January 22-26, with the purpose of strengthening bonds with tour operators and travel agents from that European nation, one of the main markets sending travelers to the Caribbean island.

The Cuban delegation will present new features nationally and the work carried out to develop hotels, the review of standards and the constant adjustment to international tendencies, points out the Communication Department of the Tourism Ministry (MINTUR).

In addition, it will promote the richness and variety of the Cuban tourist product, with emphasis in the modality of sun and beaches and also nature and adventure.

Visitors to the Fair will have the possibility to update themselves on the tourism potential of Havana, Varadero, the country's cays, Holguin and Santiago de Cuba, main regions of interest for the Spanish market, highlights the press release.

Headed by the MINTUR, the Cuban mission is composed of the hotel chains Gran Caribe, Islazul, Cubanacan, Gaviota, Barcelo, Iberostar, Roc Hoteles, Blue Diamod, HUSA, Habaguanex, Accor, Grupo Pestana Cayo Coco and Occidental; and the Cubatur and Gaviotatours receptive agencies.