

Raúl: We came to fulfill the mandate of Marti with the freedom won by our own hands

Redacción Internacional - April 11, 2015 - Army General Raúl Castro Ruz, President of the Councils of State and Ministers thanked the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean for their solidarity, enabling Cuba to participate equally in this hemispheric forum, as well as the President of the Republic of Panama for the invitation to attend.

President Raúl Castro said this Saturday that Cuba was attending the 7th Summit of the Americas in order to fulfill the mandate of Martí with the freedom won by our own hands.

He thanked the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean for their solidarity, enabling Cuba to participate equally in this hemispheric forum, as well as the President of the Republic of Panama for the invitation to attend. He also expressed thanks for the extended time he had been given, given that Cuba's "many years of absence" justified that he speak a little longer than the usual eight minutes allotted.

Raúl noted that with the creation of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States on December 2 and 3, 2011, in Caracas, a new era in the history of Our America began, clearly establishing the hard earned right of its peoples' to live in peace and freely develop as they decide fit as well as mapping a path for future development and integration based on cooperation, solidarity and the common will to preserve their independence, sovereignty and identity.

In 1800, the U.S. had considered adding Cuba to the Union, marking the southern boundary of the vast empire. In the nineteenth century, the doctrine of Manifest Destiny emerged with the aim of dominating the Americas and the world, together with the theory of the "Ripe Fruit" regarding the inevitable gravitation of Cuba toward the Union, which rejected the development of emancipatory thinking.

Raúl stated that later, through wars, conquests and interventions, this expansionist and hegemonic force stripped Our America of its territories extending down to the Rio Grande.

Following long and frustrated struggles, José Martí organized the “necessary war” and created the Cuban Revolutionary Party to lead it and to found a Republic “with all and for the good of all,” which set out to achieve “the full dignity of man.”

Accurately defining and anticipating the characteristics of his time, Martí devoted himself to the duty “of preventing the United States from spreading through the Antilles as Cuba gains its independence, and from overpowering with that additional strength our lands of America.”

Our America for him was that of the Creoles, the indigenous, the blacks and mulattos, the mestizo and hardworking America that had to make common cause with the oppressed. Today, beyond geography, this is an ideal that is starting to become reality, Raúl explained.

He added that 117 years ago, on April 11, 1898, the then President of the United States requested authorization from Congress to militarily intervene in the independence war, already won with rivers of Cuban blood, and that this body passed a deceptive Joint Resolution, which recognized the independence of the island “in fact and law.” They came as allies and seized the country as occupiers.

An appendix to its Constitution was imposed on Cuba, the Platt Amendment, which stripped the island of its sovereignty, authorizing the powerful neighbor to intervene in its internal affairs and led to the establishment of the Guantanamo Naval Base, which still usurps part of our territory. During this period, the invasion of northern capital increased, there were two military interventions and the U.S. supported cruel dictatorships.

On January 1st, 1959, 60 years after American soldiers entered Havana, the Cuban Revolution triumphed and the Rebel Army led by Fidel Castro Ruz arrived in the capital.

On April 6, 1960, just a year after the victory, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Lester Mallory, wrote in a perverse memorandum, declassified decades later, that “the majority of Cubans support Castro...There is no effective political opposition...The only foreseeable means of alienating internal support is through disenchantment and disaffection based on economic dissatisfaction and hardship... to weaken the economic life of Cuba... denying money and supplies to Cuba, to decrease monetary and real wages, to bring about hunger, desperation and overthrow of government,” the Army General quoted.

He also spoke further of the great hardship that Cubans have endured. 77% of the Cuban population was born under the rigors imposed by the blockade. “But our patriotic convictions prevailed. The aggression increased the resistance and accelerated the revolutionary process. Here we are with our heads held high and our dignity intact,” he emphasized.

Once we had already proclaimed socialism and the people had fought to defend the Bay of Pigs, President Kennedy was assassinated precisely at the moment when the leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro, had received a message from him looking to initiate a dialogue, he continued.

At another point in his speech, the Army General stated that he had expressed to President Barack Obama and was now reiterating our willingness to engage in respectful dialogue and a civilized coexistence between the two states despite our profound differences.

He described President Obama as an honest man and said that he believed that this nature arose from his humble origins. But he stressed that normalizing relations is one thing and the blockade is another.

He considered Obama’s recent statement indicating that a decision regarding Cuba’s presence on the list of state sponsors of terrorism would be reached shortly as a positive step, noting that the island should never have appeared on the list.

To date, the economic, commercial and financial blockade, which continues to be applied in full force against the island, has caused damages and shortages for the Cuban people and is the key obstacle to the development of our economy. It constitutes a violation of international law and its extraterritorial scope affects the interests of all States, he underlined.

For our part, we will continue to be deeply immersed in the process of updating the Cuban economic model with the aim of perfecting our socialism, moving towards further development and consolidating the achievements of a Revolution that has resolved to “conquer all justice.”

He also stated that Venezuela is not and cannot be a threat to the national security of a superpower like the United States and described the fact that the U.S. President has acknowledged this as positive.

“Cuba will continue to defend the ideas for which our people have assumed the greatest sacrifices and risks and fought for, alongside the poor, the sick lacking medical care, the unemployed, children abandoned or forced to work or prostitute themselves, the hungry, the discriminated against, the oppressed and the exploited that constitute the vast majority of the world population,” he highlighted.

The Cuban President also noted that financial speculation, the privileges of Bretton Woods and the unilateral suspension of the convertibility of the dollar into gold are increasingly asphyxiating. “We need a transparent and equitable financial system.”

He said that it is unacceptable that less than a dozen emporiums, mainly American, determine what is read, seen or heard across the planet.

Raúl added that the Internet must have an international, democratic and participatory governance, especially in regards to the generation of content. He also paraphrased one of Aesop's Fables and said the Internet serves for the best but also the worst.

Furthermore, he considered the militarization of cyberspace and the covert and illegal employment of computer systems to attack other States as unacceptable. “We will not allow them to dazzle or colonize us again.”

Raúl argued that hemispheric relations must change profoundly, particularly in the political, economic and cultural spheres; in order that, based on international law and the exercise of self-determination and sovereign equality, they focus on the development of mutually beneficial links and cooperation to serve the interests of all our nations and the goals they set themselves.

He recalled that the adoption in January 2014, at the Second CELAC Summit, in Havana, of the Proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace, was an important

contribution to this end, marked by Latin American and Caribbean unity in diversity.

The Cuban President stressed that “the inalienable right of every State to choose its political, economic, social and cultural system, as an essential condition to guarantee peaceful coexistence among nations,” must be respected, as stated in the Proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace.

He concluded that thanks to Fidel and the heroic Cuban people, we have come to this Summit, to fulfill the mandate of Marti with the freedom won by our own hands, “proud of our America, to serve and honor her...with the determination and capacity to help ensure that she is valued for her merits, and respected for her sacrifices.”

Speech by Army General Raúl Castro Ruz, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba and President of the Councils of State and Ministers, at the 9th Extraordinary Alba-TCP Summit, convened in solidarity with the sister nation of Venezuela, held in Caracas, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, March 17, 2015

Esteemed Heads of State and Government of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America;

Esteemed Heads of delegations and guests;

Compañeras and compañeros:

ALBA brings us together today to reaffirm our firmest support for the Bolivarian people and government in the face of the latest interventionist measures and threats from the U.S. government against Venezuela.

The facts demonstrate that history cannot be ignored. The relations between the United States

and Latin America and the Caribbean have been marked by the “Monroe Doctrine” and the objective of exercising domination and hegemony over our nations.

Bolívar had anticipated that the United States, “seems destined by Providence to plague America with misery in the name of Liberty” and Martí fell in combat before concluding the letter in which he explained the “duty of preventing the United States from spreading throughout the Antilles as Cuba gains its independence, and from overpowering with that additional strength our lands of America.”

Later came the military interventions, the coup d'états, the maneuvers to overthrow nationalist or progressive governments, the backing of bloody military dictatorships, the undercover operations, the support for terrorism and subversion, as well as the appropriation and plundering of our resources to perpetuate dependence and underdevelopment.

The triumphant audacity to carry out a socialist revolution just 90 miles from the United States, has meant immense sacrifices, suffering, loss of life and material deprivation for the Cuban people, subject to, since that very revolutionary triumph, 56 years ago, every kind of hostility, including the support and organization of armed bands in the mountains from the end of that same year of 1959 – that is, since the very year of the triumph of the Revolution – the Bay of Pigs Invasion in 1961 and the formalization of the blockade in 1962, all with the stated intention of defeating the Revolution and changing the political, economic and social order we freely chose and subsequently confirmed in a constitutional referendum.

The result has been a resounding failure, the harming of our people and the complete isolation of the United States in its intentions, as recently recognized by President Barack Obama on announcing a new policy and resolving to open another chapter. However, his government spokespeople insist on clarifying that the objectives persist and only the methods change.

The triumph of the Bolivarian Revolution was an extraordinary milestone in the history of Venezuela and the whole region, which had begun to awaken from the long neoliberal slumber. An era of change commenced in the continent and other nations decided to embark on the path towards full independence and integration and again take up the flags of our national heroes.

Alba, Unasur, CELAC were born, which united, in their diversity, previous groupings and

initiatives of genuine Latin Americanist and Caribbean calling, founded on principles of solidarity, cooperation, social justice and defense of sovereignty.

PetroCaribe was an extraordinary, generous and humanistic contribution of President Hugo Chávez Frías. Now they want to destroy PetroCaribe to threaten its member states, submit them to the oil multinationals and separate them from Venezuela. They do not realize that our peoples have decided, irrevocably, to continue our unstoppable advance and fight for a multipolar and just world, where those who were historically excluded have a voice, hope and dignity.

U.S. imperialism has attempted, without success, practically all possible formulas to destabilize and subvert the Bolivarian Chavista revolution, to recuperate its control of the largest oil reserves on the planet, and deliver a blow to the integrationist, emancipation process underway in Our America.

The arbitrary, aggressive, unjustified executive order issued by the President of the United States regarding the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela's government, describing it as a threat to its national security, shows that the United States is able to sacrifice the peace and the direction of hemispheric and regional relations, for reasons of domination and domestic politics.

The idea is untenable that a country like Venezuela - which has shown so much solidarity, never invaded or harmed any other, and contributes in a significant and altruistic manner to the energy security and economic stability of a considerable number of nations of the continent - could represent a threat to the security of the greatest super-power in history.

We support the honorable, valiant, constructive position taken by President Nicolás Maduro, (applause) who, despite the seriousness of this threat, has extended his hand to the President of the United States, to initiate a dialogue based on international law and mutual respect, which could lead to the unconditional revocation of President Obama's executive order and the normalization of relations. (Applause) Alba and CELAC should join in this proposal.

Today Venezuela is not alone, nor is our region the one it was 20 years ago. We will not tolerate the violation of sovereignty or allow peace in the region to be broken with impunity.

As we have reiterated, threats to the peace and stability of Venezuela represent threats to regional stability and peace, as well.

The peace which Venezuela today demands and which we all need, a “peace with justice, with equality, the peace on our feet, not on our knees, is peace with dignity and development,” as Maduro said, is the peace to which we committed ourselves in the Proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace, adopted by the II CELAC Summit in Havana.

Our country’s position under these circumstances remains unchanged. I reiterate the firm solidarity of the Cuban Revolution with the Bolivarian Revolution, with constitutional President Nicolás Maduro and with the civic-military union which he heads. (Applause) I reiterate our absolute loyalty to the memory of Comandante Hugo Chávez Frías, the Cuban Revolution’s best friend. (Applause)

As has been stated, we reaffirm once again, “The Cuban collaborators present in the sister country, will continue to fulfill their duties under any circumstances whatsoever, to the benefit of the fraternal, noble, generous people of Venezuela.”

The United States must understand once and for all that it is impossible to seduce or buy Cuba, or intimidate Venezuela. Our unity is indestructible. (Applause)

Nor will we concede one iota in the defense of sovereignty and independence, or tolerate any type of interference or conditions on our internal affairs.

Nor will we cease to defend just causes in Our America and the world, nor will we ever abandon our brothers in the struggle. We have come to close ranks with Venezuela and Alba, and reaffirm that principles are not negotiable. (Applause)

To defend these convictions, we will attend the 7th Summit of the Americas. We will present our positions, with firmness, clarity and respect. We will reject with determination any attempt to

isolate or threaten Venezuela, and demand a definitive end to the blockade of Cuba.

Cuban civil society will be the voice of those without a voice, and we will expose the mercenaries who will appear there as Cuba's civil society

We must call upon all peoples and governments of Our America to mobilize and remain alert in the defense of Venezuela. Solidarity is the foundation of unity and regional integration.

Thank you very much. (Applause)

Raúl Castro and Barack Obama meet at the 7th Summit of the Americas

Granma - April 11, 2015 - Presidents Raúl Castro and Barack Obama, of Cuba and the United States, held a meeting in Panama in the context of the 7th Summit of the Americas, in which both are participating

PANAMA. – Presidents Raúl Castro and Barack Obama finally met this Saturday, April 11, during a break in the sessions of the last day of the 7th Summit of the Americas, a meeting highly anticipated by everyone here.

After each had made his speech and moments after posing for the usual Official Photo, the two leaders gathered for the meeting in a small room at the ATLAPA Convention Center.

There, Raúl said that the key aspect is that we are willing to discuss everything, including human rights and press freedom. These and other issues relating to Cuba and also the United States.

I think everything can be discussed, if done so with mutual respect, the Cuban President considered. "It may be that we convince each other of certain things, but not others."

We should be under no illusions, he warned, we have many differences and a complex history, but we are ready to move forwards in these meetings to establish diplomatic relations.

Raúl referred to the opening of embassies, increased visits between the two countries and to engage in all the issues pertinent to "such close neighbors".

We can talk about everything with patience, even in these times when life moves so fast, he said. We hope that our closest collaborators know how to comply with the instructions of both Presidents.

Obama for his part, said that the history between the U.S. and Cuba was complicated, as there has been a climate of mistrust for a long time. After 50 years it is time for us to try something new, he said.

It is important to maintain contact between the two governments and peoples, he added. "We are now in a position to move on a path toward the future, we will leave behind the things that complicated the past."

Obama said the two peoples have positively supported the changes. As exchanges increase I believe there will be more direct contact and greater connection between our countries, he said.

There will continue to be deep and significant differences, we will continue to attempt to "raise concerns about democracy and human rights."

"As Raúl said in his impassioned speech they are also attempting to raise those concerns," Obama noted, later adding that, "Over time, it is possible for us to turn the page and develop a new relationship between our two countries."

We want our diplomats to have more daily contact, he said, to the point of opening the two embassies.

“Thanks to Castro for the spirit of openness that he has demonstrated towards us.” We can continue to construct our relationship based on mutual respect, he said.

Castro spoke in his speech of the hardships that the Cubans have had to endure, my policy is to help them to be more prosperous, “the Cubans are an enlightened, intelligent and brilliant people,” he concluded.

Also attending the relaxed meeting were Susan Rice, National Security adviser; Roberta Jacobson, Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs; Ben Rhodes, deputy National Security adviser; and Ricardo Zúñiga, senior director for Western Hemisphere Affairs at the National Security Council. Representing Cuba were Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla; Alejandro Castro Espín and Juan Francisco Arias Fernández, both of the Commission for National Security and Defense; and MINREX Director General for the United States, Josefina Vidal Ferreiro.

Daughter of Che Repudiates Presence of his Murder in Panama

CUBA, Prensa Latina - April 11, 2015 - Aleida Guevara, daughter of Cuban-Argentinean revolutionary man Ernesto Che Guevara, considered today a shame the participation in the activities prior to the Summit of the Americas, in Panama, of Felix Rodriguez Mendigutia, involved in the assassination of her father.

He, who allowed that, went out of his mind, and she reiterated several times the word shame to describe the presence of the former agent of the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

According to the statements by Che's daughter to the Cuban television, Felix was a CIA

instrument and was despicably willing to order the assassination.

She also called a provocation the presence of Rodriguez Mendigutia at the continental meeting, the first in history that Cuba attends.

But at the same time, it is a total discredit for them, before the public opinion (in reference to the former agent and other anti-Cuban mercenaries), because it is obvious that they are trying to cause problems and that the summit does not develop well, she remarked.

As daughter of the revolutionary man admired in the world said to feel satisfied with the rejection expressed by Cuban and people from other countries that are participating in the activities prior to the summit.

The representatives of the Caribbean island issued a statement to to denounce the participation of the terrorist in Panama and demand his expulsion of the Central American country.

Cuban Medical Brigade Departs for Chile

CUBA, April 10, 2015 (ACN). Cuban Public Health Minister Roberto Morales, member of the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party, gave on Thursday in this capital a Cuban flag to the medical brigade that left for Chile to mitigate the effects of the disaster caused by heavy rain.

At Terminal Five of Havana's Jose Marti International Airport, the Minister gave the flag to Dr. Jorge Armando Delgado, who is part of this group of 15 health professionals of the Henry Reeve International Contingent –nine physicians, six specialists of Comprehensive General Medicine, and three epidemiologists, in addition to four infirmary and two hygiene and epidemiology graduates.

Dr. Carlos Perez, head of the brigade, a specialist of Internal Medicine with two internationalist missions, read the commitment of that brigade, which reads: "we'll fight new battles for life; once again we will represent revolutionary medicine and the Cuban health system, in the best way possible."

Cuba presents business opportunities in Panama Summit of the Americas

PANAMA, April 10, 2015 (ACN) - In the 2nd Business Summit of the Americas, which meets from last Wednesday at the Panamanian capital, Rodrigo Malmierca, Cuban Minister of Foreign Trade and Foreign Investment, explained the new opportunities offered by the island in tune with its process of economic update.

Cuba will introduce, in the forum parallel to the 7th Summit of the Americas in Panama, its current portfolio of projects aimed at encouraging foreign investment in key sectors to demonstrate how much it is being done for energizing its economic development.

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Malmierca, the only Cuban confirmed to intervene in that alternative forum, said the portfolio includes 246 projects, valued at 8.7 billion dollars, and is focused to develop 11 sectors of high priority for Cuba, with the participation of foreign capital.

The minister also highlighted the Mariel Special Development Zone, a megaproject destined to become the main gate to trade in Cuba with the world, which main attraction is a port terminal equipped with the latest technologies to store more than 800,000 20-foot containers per year.

These new experiences confirm the interest of Cuba to strengthen and expand its economic relations with various countries, especially those in Latin America and the Caribbean, in spite of

the blockade imposed by the US government for more than half a century, said Malmierca to business leaders in the region present at the meeting.

On the policy of the White House, the Cuban minister said that despite the desire shown by many US business groups to establish and increase their links with the Caribbean nation, they are still limited by arbitrary measures such as the ban on Cuba to use the US dollar in its financial transactions abroad.

In that sense, Malmierca also mentioned the inability to export Cuban products to the United States and to use trade credits, and other regulations that hinder transportation, hamper trade and prohibit investment.

Despite these limitations, the island proudly displays today high standards of education, health indicators comparable only with first world countries , significant achievements in gender equality, broad advances in the field of environmental sustainability and the compliance of the Millennium Development Goals, the Cuban official stressed.

In addition, there has been cooperation links with more than 160 developing countries, mainly in education and health.

"These results that highlight Cuba's government commitment with its people and humanity have only been possible thanks to the work of the Revolution," Malmierca stated.

On the relations between Cuba and the United States, the representative of Cuba to the Panamanian forum said that, notwithstanding the statements made by President Barack Obama in favor of a restoration of bilateral ties, the blockade remains in place, and this is the main obstacle for the achievement of a bilateral exchange.

He reaffirmed that Cuba will continue to promote progress in regional integration and boosting the potentials that are untapped, from more efficient economic schemes in the context of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean Countries and the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America.

After closing, Malmierca and other members of the Cuban delegation to the 2nd Business Summit met behind closed doors with Americans and representatives of the Department of Commerce from that northern country accredited to the appointment.

Chancellor of Argentina qualifies as historical Cuban participation at the Summit of the Americas

April 11, 2015 - Argentina (Cubaminrex) - The participation of Cuba at the Summit of the Americas is a historic event, manifested Hector Timerman, Chancellor of Argentina, hour before the inauguration of this summit in Panama.

Timerman expressed that "the fact that Cuba is seated today at the Summit is result of the great debates", and to this respect, recalled last summit in Colombian city Cartagena during which "many nations warned that they would not attend if Cuba were not invited. Argentine is proud for having supported the presence of Cuba", expressed the Chancellor.