

Statement by His Excellency Mr. Esteban Lazo Hernández, Vice President of the Council of State of the Republic of Cuba at the United Nations Conference on Climate Change. Copenhagen, Denmark, 17 December 2009.

Mister Chairman:

Distinguished Heads of State and Government and other Heads of Delegation:

Distinguished delegates:

At the outset may I express my full support to the statements made yesterday here by the President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, comrade Hugo Chávez Frías, and just a few hours ago by the President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, comrade Evo Morales Ayma, which conveyed the sentiment of all countries members of ALBA, regarding the climate change, its real causes and possible solutions.

I would also like to endorse the denunciation and protest for the lack of transparency and the existence of excluding and parallel negotiating formats of documents that reportedly do not exist. It seems that a meeting is being called for tomorrow with a limited list of speakers selected in a way that is not democratic at all. We note with concern the exclusion of non-governmental organizations from this meeting room and the evident repression of demonstrators.

In the historic Conference in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, comrade Fidel Castro said, and I quote:

“An important biological species is endangered due to the accelerated and progressive destruction of its natural living conditions: man”.

“...the main responsibility for the brutal destruction of the environment lies with the consumer societies”.

“The solution cannot be to put off the development of those who need it most”.

“A better distribution of wealth and of the technologies available in the world could spare humanity such devastation. Less luxury and waste in a few countries could bring about a reduction of poverty and hunger in a large part of the planet”.

That continues to be the essence of the problem today.

Less than two decades later, the average annual growth of carbon dioxide concentrations has been greater than during the whole period for which there are regular records.

The global temperature continues to rise. The thickness of the artic icecaps is reducing. The sea level is rising. Hurricanes are increasing their frequency and intensity. The rain regime has been altered. Another 100 million hectares of forests are gone. Deserts have grown larger. Some 30% of species will disappear if the global temperature increases between 1.5 to 2.5 Centigrade degrees. Small island states are at the risk of disappearing under the sea.

Many of these effects are already irreversible. This is why the international community, particularly the developing world, urgently needs to implement actions that would let them adapt to climate change and receive the required financial assistance to this end. The Special Declaration on Climate Change adopted at the 8th Summit of Heads of States of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America that concluded recently in Havana, stated that climate change becomes the most serious and pressing problem facing humanity. But the selfishness and interest of developed countries in preserving an unjust and inequitable world order, prevent us from undertaking the changes demanded by the present and future generations.

After nearly two years of negotiations to conclude the second commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol, we have come to this conference without a real and significant agreement due to the irresponsible attitude and lack of political will of developed nations.

Those who cause 76% of accumulated emissions in the atmosphere shall take full responsibility for the impact made by their economies and lifestyles, based on squandering and unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, in the balance of global climate. Serious national emission reduction commitments from these countries are required and not hypocritical solutions based on the so-called benefits of the market.

The United States, whose emissions amount to one fourth of global emissions, shall not continue holding the international community hostage to their domestic policy.

Persisting on the efforts to disarticulate the current legal regime on climate change, embodied in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol, in order to bring about a new and single agreement applicable to parties that are absolutely unequal in terms of the size of their contributions and their economic, financial and technological capabilities, not only will continue to be a major obstacle to the efforts to have a final outcome but an option that is political and ethically unacceptable.

We hope for an agreement based on the unrestricted respect to the principles agreed upon in the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, particularly the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, under which the developed countries take a leading role in accordance with their responsibilities and capabilities.

Mr. Chairman:

An agreement stemming from these negotiations cannot be alien to the realities of a profoundly unequal and excluding international economic order, which has left –and may I resort to well-known data—2.5 billion people in poverty, 1.1 billion people without drinking water, 2.6 billion people without basic sanitation, more than 800 million people illiterate and more than 1 billion people hungry in the planet.

The gap between developed and developing countries has not stopped growing. The richest 20% of the world population, residing in the countries with greater incomes, absorbs more than 85% of the total private consumption, while 2.8 billion people live on less than two dollars a day.

A long term agreement to combat climate change cannot entail additional restrictions for the development of Third World countries.

It must include a strong mechanism by developed nations for the financing of mitigation actions and especially for the adaptation of developing countries to climate change. This is not a work of charity, but above all, a moral obligation to the countries of the South and it is a legal obligation deriving from the commitments assumed under the Convention.

The colossal sums for the bailout of companies and banks in bankruptcy and the billions of dollars invested every year in weapons show that the financial resources are there. What is needed is the political will to give them a more rational, humane and sustainable use and counter the disaster in store for us.

Cuba, a country viciously blockaded by the mightiest world power, with limited resources has implemented a real energy revolution that has enabled it to considerably reduce its emissions of carbon dioxide. As we have done in other international for a, we humbly make available our experience to the entire international community.

I conclude by sharing Fidel's remarks on that 12 June 1992:

“Let selfishness and hegemonism cease, as well as callousness, recklessness and deceit. Tomorrow it will be too late to do what should have been done a long time ago”.

Thank you very much.