

# *CELAC: A Wonderful Legacy of Hugo Chávez*

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One of the legacies of the late Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez is the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, CELAC, an organization that he described as the most important contemporary project on the Continent.

The late Venezuelan leader has been very much present in CELAC's Second Summit, the group of nations in which Chávez a true follower of Simon Bolivar, put his energy and his heart.

In his opening speech at CELAC's Summit in Havana, President Raúl Castro described Hugo Chávez as a fervent and tireless promoter of national independence, cooperation, solidarity, integration and unity within the Latin American and Caribbean nations.

CELAC was born in Caracas in 2011. The cornerstone of the region's unity, independence and development was laid at that time. President Chavez said on that occasion: "We have to learn to live with our differences and seek the best way to complement them".

CELAC is the result of a long process of political affirmation of Latin America in the face of the United States, made possible by the victory of freedom and independence in several of the nations comprising the bloc.

The merit of having worked together for Latin American integration to face common challenges with social and economic projects for the benefit of the peoples of the area falls squarely on Chavez and on the Historic Leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro. They both built on the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America, ALBA, and paved the way for the birth of CELAC

The roots of CELAC dig deeply into those projects of solidarity among the Latin American and Caribbean peoples that were developed through ALBA, a regional mechanism of integration strongly promoted by the late Venezuelan leader.

CELAC builds on such people-centered initiatives as Operation Miracle, that has returned or improved vision for hundreds of thousands of patients in all of Latin America. Again, there is PETROCARIBE, set up to achieve independence in the energy field in the region.

The distractors thought that CELAC's days were numbered after President Chavez passed away last March, but history has shown that his legacy is alive and even stronger. Hugo Chavez will be remembered as the man who rescued the dreams of Simon Bolivar and gave them a new thrust towards the goal of one strong common region: A united Latin America and Caribbean, now materialized by the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, CELAC, whose leaders can be accurately described as being truly interested in the wellbeing of their peoples and in making the whole of Latin America and the Caribbean a zone of peace and prosperity.

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