

# *Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel addresses ALBA-TCP High Level Conference*

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Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel addresses the High Level Conference on Economy, Finance and Trade  
June 10, 2020

Dear President Nicolás Maduro Moros;

Distinguished Heads of State and Government;

Heads of delegations;

Dear economic authorities of the countries of the Alliance and guests who accompany us:

I want to start by thanking Brother President Nicolás Maduro Moros for convening this ALBA-TCP Economic Conference.

There is an urgent need to exchange experiences and agree on positions to face together the effects of COVID-19, a pandemic that threatens to deepen significantly the multisectoral crisis that our societies are suffering, particularly in the economic sphere.

No matter how much global damage is expected, no one disputes that the nations of the South will suffer the most from the consequences of the crisis, because the heavy burden of underdevelopment and indebtedness is added to the unilateral coercive measures to which some of us are subjected in the context of an unjust international order, which compromises the sustainable development of our peoples.

Since the beginning of the year we have attended a painful class in Global Political Economy.

Every ship whose ports were closed; each plane that did not find a landing strip; each infected person who was required money for treatment; every financial speculation to obtain with advantage the medicines or the means of protection that everyone needs; every request for help unanswered; Each dead without a known grave - all tragedies that we have learned about through the most diverse means - is an expression of the selfishness and injustice of economic models of a system whose sole purpose is to enrich minorities at the expense of the suffering of the majority.

Incredibly, the overdeveloped world, the one that steals brains and dazzles with the brilliance of sophisticated productions, has proved incapable of using its enormous resources to build a global front against a pandemic that can only be faced with two forces within everyone's reach. : cooperation and solidarity.

In developed nations of the European Union, which have been terribly hit by the pandemic, many people speak of separation from the bloc because they feel that community integration has not worked in the face of the emergency. What could be an added strength for economically strong countries, has ended up being a weakness in the perception of various citizens, due to fundamental ethical deficiencies.

Today you can clearly see the differences between governments that have defended and strengthened the State as guarantor of social stability and those that, pushed by neoliberal theories, made it smaller by cutting social benefits, public health services and scientific research.

China, with its effective response to the epidemic in the most populous country on the planet and its contributions to the World Health Organization and other nations, shows the difference. Even those who speak disparagingly of a "Chinese virus" have been favored by the solidarity practice of the great nation.

In contrast, governments that were supposedly very effective at integrating their markets, their finances, their troops, and even organizing extra-regional invasions, failed to articulate efforts to save their own citizens.

Today the whole world pays the price for the abuses of capitalism in its savage version. The closest example is offered by Latin America, which has become the epicenter of the pandemic, to reveal to us, in all its harshness, the cost of putting the destiny of peoples in the hands of the market.

The neoliberal model, extended in our region, has not been able to meet the needs of the pandemic nor will it be able to face the post-COVID-19 scenario. Peoples subjected to right-wing economic fundamentalism today suffer the effects of the reduction of budgets destined for the Health sector, social protection, scientific research and the training of medical and paramedical personnel.

The experience of these months confirms that, with an adequate administration of fiscal policy and without neglecting macroeconomic balances, the State plays a major and non-delegable role in the duty to protect, regulate and provide the necessary means to face the crisis, save lives, maintain the vitality of the economy and at the same time develop programs of social benefit.

Economic forecasts are as dramatic as daily pandemic data. ECLAC - as explained by Alicia - foresees for the end of 2020 a 5.3% drop in economic activity in Latin America, with the consequent deterioration of important social indicators. The unemployment rate would be around 11.5%, while the poverty rate would increase to 4.4 percentage points and extreme poverty 2.6 percentage points, compared to 2019. This implies that poverty would reach in America Latin America, the most unequal region on the planet, at 34.7% of its population, equivalent to 214.7 million people, and extreme poverty at 13%, that is, 83.4 million inhabitants.

I wish they were just numbers, but we are talking about human beings: millions of people who are going to join the great masses of the excluded, exacerbating the current serious conflicts.

Much of trade and investment has been paralyzed and tax revenues and access to financing sources have decreased as a result of the economic paralysis that we face, the reduction in the demand for services and the exports of our products. Additionally, tourism, an activity of great importance for several nations in the area, has been notably affected by the necessary closure of borders.

The moment and common sense impose on the international community to put aside political differences and, together, seek joint solutions, through international cooperation and essential solidarity.

The priority of our governments in the current situation should be directed to the promotion and development of food production, with an emphasis on local productions that guarantee self-sufficiency and that demand low levels of imports.

A higher priority and state investment in the health sector are required, advancing the universal and free access of the population to basic health services.

Our historic leader, Fidel Castro, left it said and written in innumerable pronouncements: "... instead of investing so much in the development of increasingly sophisticated weapons, those with the resources to do so should promote medical research and put the humanity's service the fruits of science, creating instruments of health and life and not death".

Cuba is saved and contributes to the salvation of other nations under that philosophy. ALBA-TCP countries can do a lot. We must identify the potential of each, based on regional economic integration that prioritizes complementarity, each country producing what is most competitive and exchanging goods and services.

Cuba is willing to promote and expand collaboration on the Public Health front, in ALBA-TCP. We offer to offer advice for facing new challenges in the epidemiological field, which can be through courses and seminars. We offer a cycle of videoconferences by Cuban experts to transmit their experience in combating COVID-19 and other epidemiological situations, and we make the Pedro Kourí Institute of Tropical Medicine available to ALBA countries as a consultant on this matter.

Cuba makes an innovative medical approach to the management of COVID-19 available to ALBA, which takes into account the prevention and enhancement of immunity of patients with dysfunctional immune systems caused by aging and comorbidities; treatment of respiratory distress caused by cytokine storm in virus-positive patients.

Cuba, in addition, proposes the clinical use of Cuban innovative biotechnological drugs that have been favorable in treatments for Cuban patients, especially critical and serious elderly people.

Solidarity is essential and has not been lacking in these years, but it is urgent to improve the institutional structures of the ALBA-TCP economic front to establish an economic agenda in the short and medium terms, design incentives and work with greater agility and flexibility in identifying opportunities. and joint projects. We have the political will to carry it out and the demonstrated ability to cooperate and

complement each other, all of which can be multiplied.

The "new real economy" requires a more productive approach and less inclined to financial activity. Financing must be channeled towards the generation of goods and services, encouraging "to earn more by producing than by moving money."

And since our historical adversaries are undertaking it against the global consensus so essential today, it is up to us to promote and strengthen multilateralism and support the management of the World Health Organization and the Pan American Health Organization to coordinate a collective response, the only way effective to beat the fight to the pandemic.

Cuba offers, modestly, the experiences of our national strategy to overcome the effects of COVID-19 and, in parallel, face the economic crisis that threatens the entire world and will be more serious for those of us who are victims of genocidal blockades.

Despite the complex situation we are going through, Cuba has not renounced the objectives of the National Plan for Economic and Social Development until 2030 for the well-being, development and prosperity of the people.

The contribution of Cuban biotechnology and other sectors of science has been decisive. Our talented scientists, with their newly created research and pharmaceuticals, have literally defeated death. While in the rest of the world 80% of critically ill and critically ill patients die, Cuban science and medicine have saved 80% of critically ill and critically ill patients infected with the SARS-CoV-2 virus. And this has been achieved without renouncing the internationalist practice of sharing what we have. The massive and mendacious campaign by the United States Government against the Cuban medical collaboration, which deprived vulnerable populations in Brazil, Bolivia and Ecuador of health services, where the pandemic is causing severe havoc, has been defeated. At this time, 34 Cuban medical brigades, made up of more than 2,500 aid workers, contribute in solidarity to mitigate the impact of the pandemic in 26 nations, at the request of their governments.

They join the more than 28,000 Health professionals who were already providing services in 59 countries before COVID-19.

None of these contributions is recognized by the United States Government, whose administration has intensified the economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba with new coercive measures aimed at further hindering the national effort to confront the pandemic and for recovery.

Excellencies and friends:

Regional peace and security are also threatened. The North American administration refused to pronounce publicly and clearly before a terrorist act that occurred in the capital of that country against the Cuban Embassy, which confirms the attitude of complicity and collusion with those who promote violent acts against our countries, and ratifies that the aggressive language and an inciter of extreme and violent positions, he fulfills the strategic objectives of the current US government.

Instead of responding to the just demands of tens of thousands of people who, inside and outside the United States, speak out peacefully in the face of police abuse, racism, xenophobia and presidential contempt for those excluded from the "American dream", the current administration insists on dedicating resources and energies to its Machiavellian plans to intervene in Our America.

The sister Venezuelan nation has been the victim of multiple attacks in contravention of the norms and principles of International Law, enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, and of the postulates of the Proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace.

The ruthlessness of the coercive economic measures that the United States Government unilaterally applies against Venezuela arouses indignation. The persecution of merchant ships constitutes an act of modern piracy, which sets a dire precedent in the region in relation to the rules and regulations that govern international commercial shipping.

Cuba reaffirms its support for President Nicolás Maduro and the civic-military union of the Bolivarian and Chavista people.

No less repugnant are the measures against the Nicaraguan people with the aim of preventing their well-being and security. We express once again our solidarity with the Government of Reconciliation and National Unity of the sister Republic of Nicaragua, chaired by Commander Daniel Ortega Saavedra in his heroic resistance against interference and interventionism.

We reiterate our solidarity with the brotherly Caribbean countries, which suffered the horrors of slavery, the transatlantic trafficking, and colonial and neo-colonial plunder, and who today face the challenges resulting from climate change, natural disasters, the unjust financial system and inclusion in lists. from non-cooperative jurisdictions, which jeopardize their small economies. We demand for them a fair, special and differentiated treatment. The Caribbean will always find in the ALBA-TCP a platform for articulation, cooperation and complementarity for the defense of its legitimate claims.

Brothers:

The reality we face requires solidarity against selfishness.

There is no way to surrender, even with the knee on the neck, to the peoples who learned to breathe the freedom conquered with the blood of their best children and decide to fight together.

These difficult times should motivate us to continue working together, with more cooperation and agreement.

This was the dream of our predecessors and will continue to be a priority of our Alliance. Working together, victory will be ours, now and forever!

Thank you.

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