Forty Percent of Venezuelans to Have Public Housing by 2019

Caracas, April 17 (teleSUR-RHC)-- Nearly half of Venezuela's population will be living in free or low cost housing provided by the government by the end of the decade, planning minister Ricardo Menendez said on Wednesday.

The fast development of state-provided houses has prompted the government to form a high-level committee to explore creating socialist-style cities in the long term. "By 2019, we will have 40 percent of the population living in Great Housing Mission (GMV) homes, and we will have a golden opportunity … to redesign the concept of the city," Menendez said.

The minister argued a socialist-inspired city planning would aim to maximize access to public spaces such as parks, while minimizing traffic congestion. "We will bring together everything we have achieved so far, and develop a new … doctrine for the creation of a socialist city," he said.

One of the government's urban planning priorities will be how to best distribute homes built under the GMV. The mission was first launched to provide housing for Venezuelans who lost their homes in the devastating 2010 floods. However, since then the GMV has been expanded to provide low cost housing to the wider population.

In 2011, late President Hugo Chavez explained the mission would address the "social debt" left behind by former governments that failed to provide quality housing to all Venezuelans. In the past four years the mission has distributed more than 642,000 homes – mostly to the poor.

The houses are offered either for free, or at a low cost, depending on the means of the prospective owners. Menendez argued the success of the Great Housing Mission illustrates that socialist urban planning is a viable alternative to the capitalist status-quo. "The socialist city isn't an abstract (idea), it's a way to organize to create a better society," he said.

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