

Ibero-America Briefs

Caribbean Leaders Tell U.S.: Lift Sanctions on Venezuela!

Caribbean heads of state and government and other regional leaders are calling on the U.S. to lift its sanctions against Venezuela so that the successful PetroCaribe program established some years ago by the late Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez can be reinstated. PetroCaribe allowed Caribbean nations to purchase oil at market price but only pay a portion of the price up front, providing them with oil and financial benefits. When the Trump administration unilaterally sanctioned Venezuela's state-owned oil company PDVSA, and impeded Venezuelan government transactions with U.S. financial institutions, the program came to an end, causing great hardship for Caribbean nations, particularly in the recent period as energy prices have soared.

The issue was debated at the July 4–5 Caribbean Community (Caricom) Regular Meeting of the Conference of the Heads of Government in Paramaribo, Suriname, where energy security was a main agenda item. It was reported that Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro wants to revitalize the PetroCaribe program and is offering to sell oil at a 35% discount to the region once sanctions are removed. Maduro is also offering to reduce some nations' PetroCaribe debt.

At the same summit, Belize's Prime Minister John Briceño warned that fuel prices "have been too high for too long. We in the Caribbean call for the immediate lifting of the sanctions imposed on Venezuela so that the revo-

lutionary PetroCaribe program can be reinstated, providing our economies with much-needed relief."

Several other leaders echoed his call and announced they want to negotiate directly with Washington on the issue. At the Paramaribo meeting, Gonsalves pointed out that American officials have twice traveled to Caracas to try to carve out exemptions to the sanctions to facilitate Venezuelan oil exports to European countries. Now, he said, "you can't on the one hand be looking for carve-outs for Europeans ... going to Venezuela looking for some special arrangement to get more oil, and then we are suffering," *Amandala* reported him as saying.

AMLO Meets Biden, Praises Historic Models of U.S.-Mexico Relations

Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) met with U.S. President Joe Biden in the White House July 12, and then visited the FDR and Martin Luther King memorials. Both in his remarks to Biden and later at the memorials, AMLO emphasized that, although there have been periods of great tension between the two countries, there have also been periods of exemplary friendship and respect for sovereignty. He pointed to the relationship between Abraham Lincoln and Benito Juárez in the 1860s, and between Franklin Roosevelt and Lázaro Cárdenas in the 1930s, as the model for bilateral relations. This is a historic theme similar to that which AMLO struck when he met with then President Donald Trump in Washington in July 2020.

AMLO stated at the memorial:

"Lincoln supported the cause of the best president in our country's history, Benito Juárez. And when the Europeans, the French, invaded us (in 1861), Lincoln did not recognize [Emperor] Maximilian and he was always in favor of our Republic." AMLO added that when President Lázaro Cárdenas nationalized Mexico's oil in 1938, "President Roosevelt, instead of threatening, instead of trying to invade Mexico, was very respectful and he always stuck to a good neighbor policy, not only with Mexico, but with all the countries of Latin America."

Evo Morales: UK-U.S. 'Policy of Empire, Culture of Death' Drove '19 Coup

In a broad-ranging interview with former Bolivian President Evo Morales, Matt Kennard, chief investigator for *Declassified UK*, asked Morales to comment on the report, published by Kennard himself in March 2021, that the British embassy in La Paz and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) were involved in the November 2019 coup against Morales and in subsequent activity to secure looting rights to Bolivia's natural resources, specifically its large lithium deposits. The evidence Kennard provided in that 2021 article came from FCO documents his publication had obtained.

In the [interview](#), published in *Consortium News* July 15, Morales told Kennard that he was convinced that the 2019 coup was "an attack on our economic model, a model that belongs to the people, not to empire, not to the International Monetary Fund," but one based on Bolivia having sovereign control over its natural resources

through nationalization and using that sovereign control to industrialize and develop the nation. This was the model Morales said he established during his 13 years as President, and is what empire can't accept or forgive—"that there is another model better than neoliberalism, that another world is possible, that another Bolivia is possible."

In his 2021 article, Kennard demonstrated that the 2019 coup was very much an Anglo-American effort. Clearly on orders from the FCO, the British embassy in La Paz had coordinated with British financial and intelligence networks but also with the U.S. State Department and Organization of American States (OAS) to lay the groundwork for Morales's ouster, promoting allegations that he had committed vote fraud in the second round of presidential elections in November 2019.

Morales found it "incomprehensible" that the Foreign Office replied "there was no coup" when Kennard confronted it with his initial investigation showing otherwise. "This is a totally colonial mindset," Morales said. "They think God put them there, so the world belongs to the U.S. and the UK." "In politics," he said, "we must ask ourselves, are we with the people or are we with the empire?... If we are with the people, we fight for life, for humanity; if we are with the empire, we are with the politics of death, the culture of death, interventions and pillaging of the people. That is what we ask ourselves as humans, as leaders: 'Are we at the service of our people?'"

'International Community' Unwilling to Address Haiti's Crisis

The violence between rival gangs that now dominates several parts of

Port-au-Prince saw one of its worst manifestations beginning July 8, when two rival gangs began a shootout over control of the Brooklyn section of the capital's largest slum, Cité Soleil. Residents were trapped, unable to leave or obtain food, water, or medical care; nor were ambulances or other vehicles allowed to enter. The toll of that rampage after five days was 89 dead, 74 wounded, many missing, with charred bodies visible, corpses left to rot, houses destroyed, and thousands of refugees, according to the National Human Rights Defense Network (RNDDH).

Although not always of this magnitude, scenes like this are played out in neighborhoods across the capital daily as rival gangs vie for control—trapping citizens where they live, often engaging in barbaric acts of violence, murdering men, women, and children and forcibly recruiting children. As the *Miami Herald* documented July 8, the underfunded, outgunned, and outmanned Haitian National Police struggles to combat the gangs, lacking even the most basic protective gear or weapons.

In this situation, providing humanitarian assistance is a nightmare. Gangs have blocked access roads into and out of the capital. Jean-Martin Bauer, Country Director for the UN's World Food Program, Haiti, warned that "the situation is spiraling out of control," and "getting worse every day," with at least 1.3 million people in the capital suffering from acute food insecurity. People can't get to work; farmers from outside Port-au-Prince can't get their products to market; gasoline is scarce, and food price inflation is running at 53%.

The response of the "international community" to the Haitian crisis has been worse than useless. The UN Security Council resolution approved July 15 extending the discredited UN

mission in Haiti for a year was filled with condescending admonitions that Haitian "stakeholders" must engage in serious political debate. Russia's UN Permanent Deputy Representative, Dmitry Polyansky, pointed out that the words in the resolution "do not match actions." Even the claims about the unacceptable nature of the weapons flow "are not matched by the desire to do anything to address it," he said.

China-CELAC Forum Addresses Poverty Relief and Development

Representatives of China's Foreign Ministry and officials from the foreign ministries of the 32 member nations of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) met virtually July 13 for the second annual China-CELAC Forum on Poverty Reduction and Promotion of Development to discuss these pressing issues, the Argentine-China magazine of cultural exchange *Dangdai* reported July 14. According to the Spanish-language edition of *People's Daily*, the hope is that this will become an annual event to foster deeper cooperation in the area of poverty reduction and rural development in the post-COVID era. Officials from the United Nations also participated.

All attending were committed to addressing the setbacks that occurred in the region as a result of the COVID pandemic and to exchange information, especially with China, on how to make a dent in the poverty that has increased over the past two years. *Global Times* July 14 reported CELAC's estimate that the number of people living in extreme poverty in Ibero-America and the Caribbean rose by five million between 2020 and 2021.