

Venezuelan President's Speech on Climate Change in Copenhagen

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President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela , Hugo Chávez:

Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, Excellencies, friends, I promise that I will not talk more than most have spoken this afternoon. Allow me an initial comment which I would have liked to make as part of the previous point which was expressed by the delegations of Brazil , China , India , and Bolivia . We were there asking to speak but it was not possible. Bolivia 's representative said, my salute of course to Comrade President Evo Morales, who is there, President of the Republic of Bolivia .

She said among other things the following, I noted it here, she said the text presented is not democratic, it is not inclusive.

I had hardly arrived and we were just sitting down when we heard the president of the previous session, the minister, saying that a document came about, but nobody knows, I've asked for the document, but we still don't have it, I think nobody knows of that top secret document.

Now certainly, as the Bolivian comrade said, that is not democratic, it is not inclusive. Now, ladies and gentlemen, isn't that just the reality of the world?

Are we in a democratic world? Is the global system inclusive? Can we hope for something democratic, inclusive from the current global system?

What we are experiencing on this planet is an imperial dictatorship, and from here we continue denouncing it. Down with imperial dictatorship! And long live the people and democracy and equality on this planet!

And what we see here is a reflection of this: Exclusion.

There is a group of countries that consider themselves superior to us in the South, to us in the Third World, to us, the underdeveloped countries, or as a great friend Eduardo Galeano says, we, the crushed countries, as if a train ran over us in history.

In light of this, it's no surprise that there is no democracy in the world and here we are again faced with powerful evidence of global imperial dictatorship. Then two youths got up here, fortunately the enforcement officials were decent, some push around, and they collaborated right? There are many people outside, you know? Of course, they do not fit in this room,

they are too many people. I've read in the news that there were some arrests, some intense protests, there in the streets of Copenhagen , and I salute all those people out there, most of them youth.

Of course young people are concerned, I think rightly much more than we are, for the future of the world. We have – most of us here – the sun on our backs, and they have to face the sun and are very worried.

One could say, Mr. President, that a spectre is haunting Copenhagen, to paraphrase Karl Marx, the great Karl Marx, a spectre is haunting the streets of Copenhagen, and I think that spectre walks silently through this room, walking around among us, through the halls, out below, it rises, this spectre is a terrible spectre almost nobody wants to mention it: Capitalism is the spectre, almost nobody wants to mention it.

It's capitalism, the people roar, out there, hear them.

I have been reading some of the slogans painted on the streets, and I think those slogans of these youngsters, some of which I heard when I was young, and of the young woman there, two of which I noted. You can hear among others, two powerful slogans. One: Don't change the climate, change the system.

And I take it onboard for us. Let's not change the climate, let's change the system! And consequently we will begin to save the planet. Capitalism is a destructive development model that is putting an end to life; it threatens to put a definitive end to the human species.

And another slogan calls for reflection. It is very in tune with the banking crisis that swept the world and still affects it, and of how the rich northern countries gave aid to bankers and the big banks. The U.S. alone gave, well, I lost the figure, but it is astronomical, to save the banks. They say in the streets the following: If the climate were a bank it would have been saved already.

And I think that's true. If the climate were one of the biggest capitalist banks, the rich governments would have saved it.

I think Obama has not arrived. He received the Nobel Peace Prize almost the same day that he sent 30 thousand soldiers to kill more innocents in Afghanistan , and now he comes to stand here with the Nobel Peace Prize, the president of the United States .

But the United States has the machinery to make money, to make dollars, and has saved, well, they believe they have saved the banks and the capitalist system.

Well, this is a side comment that I wanted to make previously. We were raising our hand to accompany Brazil , India , Bolivia , China , in their interesting position that Venezuela and the countries of the Bolivarian Alliance firmly share. But hey, they didn't let us speak, so do not count these minutes please, Mr. President.

Look, over there I met, I had the pleasure of meeting this French author Hervé Kempf. Recommending this book, I recommend it, it is available in Spanish – there is Hervé – its also in French, and surely in English, How the Rich are Destroying the Planet. Hervé Kempf: How the Rich are Destroying the Planet. This is what Christ said: it would be easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. This is what our lord Christ said.

The rich are destroying the planet. Do they think they can go to another when they destroy this one? Do they have plans to go to another planet? So far there is none on the horizon of the galaxy.

This book has just reached me, Ignacio Ramonet gave it to me, and he is also around somewhere in this room. Finishing the prologue or the preamble this phrase is very important, Kempf says the following, I'll read it:

"We can not reduce global material consumption if we don't make the powerful go down several levels, and if we don't combat inequality. It is necessary that to the ecological principle that is so useful at the time of becoming conscious, 'think globally and act locally,' we add the principle that the situation imposes: 'Consume less and share better.'"

I think it is good advice that this French author Hervé Kempf gives us.

Well then, Mr. President, climate change is undoubtedly the most devastating environmental problem of this century. Floods, droughts, severe storms, hurricanes, melting ice caps, rise in mean sea levels, ocean acidification and heat waves, all of that sharpens the impact of global crisis besetting us.

Current human activity exceeds the threshold of sustainability, endangering life on the planet, but also in this we are profoundly unequal.

I want to recall: the 500 million richest people, 500 million, this is seven percent, seven percent, seven percent of the world's population. This seven percent is responsible, these 500 million richest people are responsible for 50 percent of emissions, while the poorest 50 percent accounts for only seven percent of emissions.

So it strikes me as a bit strange to put the United States and China at the same level. The United States has just, well; it will soon reach 300 million people. China has nearly five times the U.S. population. The United States consumes more than 20 million barrels of oil a day, China only reaches 5-6 million barrels a day, you can't ask the same of the United States and China .

There are issues to discuss, hopefully we the heads of states and governments can sit down and discuss the truth, the truth about these issues.

So, Mr. President, 60 percent of the planet's ecosystems are damaged, 20 percent of the earth's crust is degraded, we have been impassive witnesses to deforestation, land conversion, desertification, deterioration of fresh water systems, overexploitation of marine resources, pollution and loss of biodiversity.

The overuse of the land exceeds by 30 percent the capacity to regenerate it. The planet is losing what the technicians call the ability to regulate itself; the planet is losing this. Every day more waste than can be processed is released. The survival of our species hammers in the consciousness of humanity. Despite the urgency, it has taken two years of negotiations for a second commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol, and we attend this event without any real and meaningful agreement.

And indeed, on the text that comes from out of the blue, as some have called it, Venezuela says, and the ALBA countries, the Bolivarian Alliance say that we will not accept, since then

we've said it, any other texts that do not come from working groups under the Kyoto Protocol and the Convention. They are the legitimate texts that we have been discussing so intensely over the years.

And in these last few hours, I believe you have not slept, plus you have not eaten, you have not slept. It does not seem logical to me to come out now with a document from scratch, as you say.

The scientifically substantiated objective of reducing the emission of polluting gases and achieving an agreement on long-term cooperation clearly, today at this time, has apparently failed, for now.

What is the reason? We have no doubt.

The reason is the irresponsible attitude and lack of political will from the most powerful nations on the planet. No one should feel offended, I recall the great José Gervasio Artigas when he said: "With the truth, I neither offend nor fear." But it is actually an irresponsible attitude of positions, of reversals, of exclusions, of elitist management of a problem that belongs to everyone and that we can only solve together.

The political conservatism and selfishness of the largest consumers, of the richest countries shows high insensitivity and lack of solidarity with the poor, the hungry, and the most vulnerable to disease, to natural disasters. Mr. President, a new and single agreement is essential, applicable to absolutely unequal parties, according to the magnitude of their contributions and economic, financial and technological capabilities and based on unconditional respect for the principles contained in the Convention.

Developed countries should set binding, clear and concrete commitments for the substantial reduction of their emissions and assume obligations of financial and technological assistance to poor countries to cope with the destructive dangers of climate change. In this respect, the uniqueness of island states and least developed countries should be fully recognized.

Mr. President, climate change is not the only problem facing humanity today. Other scourges and injustices beset us, the gap between rich and poor countries has continued to grow, despite all the millennium goals, the Monterrey financing summit, at all these summits as the President of Senegal said here, revealing a great truth, there are promises and unfulfilled promises and the world continues its destructive march.

The total income of the 500 richest individuals in the world is greater than the income of the 416 million poorest people. The 2.8 billion people living in poverty on less than \$2 per day, representing 40 per percent of the global population, receive only 5 percent of world income.

Today each year about 9.2 million children die before reaching their fifth year and 99.9 percent of these deaths occur in poorer countries.

Infant mortality is 47 deaths per thousand live births, but is only 5 per thousand in rich countries. Life expectancy on the planet is 67 years, in rich countries it is 79, while in some poor nations is only 40 years.

Additionally, there are 1.1 billion people without access to drinking water, 2.6 billion without

sanitation services, over 800 million illiterate and 1.02 billion hungry people, that's the global scenario.

Now the cause, what is the cause?

Let's talk about the cause, let's not evade responsibilities, and let's not evade the depth of this problem. The cause, undoubtedly, I return to the theme of this whole disastrous panorama, is the destructive metabolic system of capital and its embodied model: Capitalism.

Here's a quote that I want to read briefly, from that great liberation theologian Leonardo Boff, as we know a Brazilian, our American. Leonardo Boff says on this subject as follows:

"What is the cause? Ah, the cause is the dream of seeking happiness through material accumulation and of endless progress, using for this science and technology with which they can exploit without limits all the resources of the earth."

And he cites here Charles Darwin and his "natural selection", the survival of the fittest, but we know that the strongest survive over the ashes of the weakest.

Jean Jacques Rousseau, we must always remember, said that between the strong and the weak, freedom is oppressed. That's why the Empire speaks of freedom; it's the freedom to oppress, to invade, to kill, to annihilate, and to exploit. That is their freedom, and Rousseau adds this saving phrase: "Only the law liberates."

There are countries that are hoping that no document comes out of here precisely because they do not want a law, do not want a standard, because the absence of these norms allows them to play at their exploitative freedom, their crushing freedom.

We must make an effort and pressure here and in the streets, so that a commitment comes out of here, a document that commits the most powerful countries on earth.

Well, Mr. President, Leonardo Boff asks... Have you met Boff? I do not know whether Leonardo might come, I met him recently in Paraguay, we've always read him.

Can a finite earth support an infinite project? The thesis of capitalism, infinite development, is a destructive pattern, let's face it.

Then Boff asks us, what might we expect from Copenhagen? At least this simple confession: We can not continue like this. And a simple proposition: Let's change course. Let's do it, but without cynicism, without lies, without double agendas, no documents out of the blue, with the truth out in the open.

How long, we ask from Venezuela, Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, how long are we going to allow such injustices and inequalities? How long are we going to tolerate the current international economic order and prevailing market mechanisms? How long are we going to allow huge epidemics like HIV/AIDS to ravage entire populations? How long are we going to allow the hungry to not eat or to be able to feed their own children? How long are we going to allow millions of children to die from curable diseases? How long will we allow armed conflicts to massacre millions of innocent human beings in order for the powerful to seize the resources of other peoples?

Cease the aggressions and the wars! We the peoples of the world ask of the empires, to those who try to continue dominating the world and exploiting us.

No more imperial military bases or military coups! Let's build a more just and equitable economic and social order, let's eradicate poverty, let's immediately stop the high emission levels, let's stop environmental degradation and avoid the great catastrophe of climate change, let's integrate ourselves into the noble goal of everyone being more free and united.

Mr. President, almost two centuries ago, a universal Venezuelan, a liberator of nations and precursor of consciences left to posterity a full-willed maxim: "If nature opposes us, let's fight against it and make it obey us." That was Simón Bolívar, the Liberator.

From Bolivarian Venezuela, where a day like today some ten years ago, ten years exactly, we experienced the biggest climate tragedy in our history (the Vargas tragedy it is called), from this Venezuela whose revolution tries to win justice for all people, we say it is only possible through the path of socialism!

Socialism, the other spectre Karl Marx spoke about, which walks here too, rather it is like a counter-spectre. Socialism, this is the direction, this is the path to save the planet, I don't have the least doubt. Capitalism is the road to hell, to the destruction of the world. We say this from Venezuela, which because of socialism faces threats from the U.S. Empire.

From the countries that comprise ALBA, the Bolivarian Alliance, we call, and I want to, with respect, but from my soul, call in the name of many on this planet, we say to governments and peoples of the Earth, to paraphrase Simón Bolívar, the Liberator: If the destructive nature of capitalism opposes us, let's fight against it and make it obey us, let's not wait idly by for the death of humanity.

History calls on us to unite and to fight.

If capitalism resists, we are obliged to take up a battle against capitalism and open the way for the salvation of the human species. It's up to us, raising the banners of Christ, Mohammed, equality, love, justice, humanity, the true and most profound humanism. If we don't do it, the most wonderful creation of the universe, the human being, will disappear, it will disappear.

This planet is billions of years old, and this planet existed for billions of years without us, the human species, i.e. it doesn't need us to exist. Now, without the Earth we will not exist, and we are destroying Pachamama as Evo says, as our indigenous brothers from South America say.

Finally, Mr. President, and to finish, let's listen to Fidel Castro when he said: "One species is in danger of extinction: Humanity."

Let's listen to Rosa Luxemburg when she said: "Socialism or Barbarism."

Let us listen to Christ the Redeemer when he said: "Blessed are the poor for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, we are capable of not making this Earth the tomb of humanity. Let us make this earth a heaven, a heaven of life, of peace, peace and brotherhood for all humanity, for the human species.

Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much and enjoy your meal.

Translated by Kiraz Janicke for Venezuelanalysis.com

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