

The economic model that is in crisis needs urgent change

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As representatives from a wide diversity of trade union, farmer, indigenous, women's, youth, consumer advocacy, human rights, environmental and, in general, social and civil organizations that are part of hemispheric networks such as the Hemispheric Social Alliance and united here at the IV Peoples' Summit of the Americas in Trinidad and Tobago, we wish to transmit this message from the people we represent :

1) The Summit of the Americas continues to be marked by exclusion and lack of democracy. First, we consider the continued exclusion of Cuba from hemispheric governmental forums to be inexplicable and unacceptable. No reason suffices to justify this exclusion, especially when nearly all countries of the hemisphere – the only exception being the U.S. – have diplomatic relations with this sovereign nation. We demand the full inclusion of Cuba in all hemispheric spaces in which it chooses to participate and, above all, an end to the illegitimate and unjust blockade that the United States has imposed on the island for decades. [This Summit represents an opportunity for President Obama to demonstrate whether or not he intends to truly change hemispheric relations that have been based on impositions]. For the majority of countries in the hemisphere, we also condemn the near complete lack of channels for democratic participation and consultation on decisions that are made in the official Summit, decisions which will affect the destinies of our nations. This exclusion is one of the reasons for which we are here meeting in the Peoples' Summit. In this same vein, we want to raise the most energetic protest to the official treatment of our summit, which has included every conceivable obstacle, direct hostility and arbitrary actions that we have had to overcome to make the Summit possible. This has included detentions, deportations, interrogations, mistreatment, spying, denying us the use of facilities and retracting guarantees.

2) In the face of the grave crisis shaking the world and our hemisphere in particular, which illustrates the failure of the so-called "free trade" model it is evident that the official Summit's declaration is far from representing the indispensable and urgent change that current reality and hemispheric relations demand. We note with alarm that this 'project' chooses to ignore the significance of a crisis with such historic dimensions. It is as if by doing this, one could 'disappear' the crisis. The official declaration covers with rhetoric, ambiguity, and meaningless good intentions its lack of an urgently needed turnaround in hemispheric policies. What is worse, it insists on proposing solutions that are merely more of the same old policies, more of the medicine that has created the worst illness – in other words, more neoliberalism and free trade. The declaration further ratifies support for antiquated institutions that contributed to the current debacle. Even if by omission, giving forums such as the G-20, which are illegitimate and exclusive, the power to determine so-called solutions to the crisis—such as "prescriptions" to dedicate more resources to the already repudiated IMF—is to maintain a vicious circle. Canceling the illegitimate debts of countries in the South, rather than condemning them to further indebtedness, is a solution that could actually provide countries the resources needed for development.

3) The neoliberal model arose as a "solution" to previous crises, but it has only lead to an even worse crisis. The solution must not be more of the same. We, the social movements and organizations from the hemisphere, affirm that another solution to the crisis is possible and necessary. The solutions

will not be found by reactivating the same economic model or establishing an even more perverse one. The solution will not be found in continuing to convert everything – including life itself – into mere commodities. Instead, the solution must be one that puts ‘Living Well’ for all people above the profits of a few. It is not a question of resolving a financial crisis, but rather overcoming all of the dimensions of the crisis – which include the food, climate and energy crises. This requires guaranteeing the people’s food sovereignty, putting an end to the pillaging of the South’s natural resources, paying the ecological debt that is owed to the South and developing sustainable energy strategies. If the governments gathered in the official Summit refuse to explicitly address the urgent changes needed, they thereby renounce their right to receive support from their people. We salute the fact that some presidents from the South are raising with dignity in the official event, alternatives which coincide with those which the people of the Americas are raising.

4) We demand that in the short term, the working people of the hemisphere must not be made to bear the brunt of the crisis, which is what has been happening so far. Instead of dedicating billions of dollars to rescuing financial speculators and large corporations, that profited before the crisis, provoked the crisis, and then returned to the same behavior, we demand that the people be rescued. This is one way to strengthen our national economies and promote recovery directed towards real development that inverts the order of the beneficiaries, giving priority to the people.

5) We also demand that the crisis not be used as a pretext to attack or reduce social rights that have been won. Rights do not have costs. On the contrary, the best solution to the crisis is to expand rights, making decent work, democratic freedoms, and human, economic, social and cultural rights a reality. To start with, the full rights of indigenous peoples must finally be recognized as well as women’s rights.

6) A just and sustainable solution to the crisis necessitates a complete reorganizing of hemispheric relations and a burial of the so-called “free trade” model. No more FTAs. It is necessary to replace the FTAs that have been proliferating throughout the region with a new model of agreements between nations based on equity, complementary arrangements, mutual benefit, cooperation and just trade. This model must protect the right to development, the right of nations to protect their goods, strategic resources and sovereignty. Processes of regional integration that are developed on these bases are also a strong lever for resolving the crisis and promoting alternative solutions. We especially call on the governments in countries of the South that have advanced these types of processes to deepen them, to not lose their autonomy and to not stray from this path. Perverse and hegemonic projects such as the FTAA should be buried forever. We ask governments in the region, namely the new United States administration headed by President Obama, to make explicit their position on the future of initiatives such as the one developed in the entrails of the Bush administration – Pathways to Prosperity in the Americas – that not only aims to revive the corpse of the FTAA, but also to subordinate the rest of the hemisphere to Washington’s policies and security forces. We hereby affirm that we, the people of the Americas, will not allow this to happen.

7) Cooperation between nations must not, in any circumstance, include the militarization of our societies. The security policies of each country must not be subordinated to the interests of any power, nor should human rights and individual guarantees be restricted. We demand the closure of all military bases and the withdrawal of all troops and the U.S. IV Fleet from the waters and territories of Latin America and the Caribbean. The future for our America demands an end, once and for all, with the colonial domination of Puerto Rico and all forms of colonialism in the Caribbean.

Presidents : listening to your people and acting in favor of their interests—not the profits of a small few—is the only true, lasting and sustainable solution to end the crisis and build another, more just America.

HEMISPHERIC SOCIAL ALLIANCE / IV PEOPLE'S SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS