

BOLIVIA

# Save the Planet from Capitalism, Morales Says

Saturday 24 April 2010, by [CHAVEZ Franz](#) (Date first published: 21 April 2010).

:COCHABAMBA, Bolivia, Apr 21 (IPS) - Activists meeting at the people's conference on climate change in this Bolivian city booed a message from United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon but cheered at host President Evo Morales's chant of "planet or death!"

A football stadium in Tiquipaya, in the suburbs of Cochabamba, was inflamed Tuesday with temperatures over 30 degrees Celsius and the fervor of around 20,000 environmental activists and delegates from 125 nations.

But although they were invited, presidents from the region failed to show up for the World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth, which ends Thursday.

The stadium, ablaze with the multi-coloured traditional garments of different Andean and Amazonian native communities and the flags of people from different countries around the world that contrasted with the cold formality of presidential summits, served as the stage for Morales, of Aymara descent, to call for an "inter-continental movement" in defence of Mother Earth.

The U.N. secretary-general's message, read out by the head of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Alicia Bárcena, on Tuesday, the first day of the people's conference, was interrupted by catcalls and whistles from activists in protest against the exclusion of grassroots groups from policy-making on climate change.

"We came with all respect to listen to the people, you invited us here. If you don't want us to be here we can leave," Bárcena said.

"For capitalism, we are merely consumers and a source of labour, and we have the right to say capitalism is the enemy of the planet," Morales said, buoyed up by the cheers of the thousands of participants who have flocked to the dusty streets of this outlying Cochabamba district that is home to around 3,000 people.

"Justice is only possible with solidarity, equality and respect for the rights of Mother Earth and for the atmosphere, water and the new model of development," he said.

"Capitalism is the chief enemy of humanity, synonymous with inequality and destruction of the planet," he said, calling on people to organise at the grassroots level to save the planet.

He suggested starting with simple steps like the use of biodegradable kitchen utensils like clay plates instead of disposable plastic. He also lashed out at transgenic crops and junk food.

Ecuadorean indigenous leader Franklin Columba concurred with Morales, saying that reaching a balance with nature was essential to saving Pachamama or Mother Earth.

“The Council of Wise Elders says that care and love are needed to keep nature clean. That is the true awareness that human beings must achieve,” he told IPS as the delegates to the conference were enjoying Afro-Bolivian and traditional Andean music.

Nicolás Charca, a Quechua Indian from the Canchis province of Peru, talked about unifying the movements, and expressed deep concern over pollution caused by the oil and mining industries.

But “not only the developed countries are to blame,” Mitsu Miura, a Japanese researcher into Andean cultures, told IPS in a friendly tone. “We would be closing our eyes if we only held the industrialised countries responsible.”

Linda Velarde from New Mexico in the southwestern United States, who has been an indigenous rights activist for 40 years, challenged participants to take action now and stop consuming products that pollute.

She said she does not agree with the idea of eliminating capitalism, and pointed out that not everyone in the U.S. is a consumerist and that many are in favour, for example, of reforestation policies.

Another activist from the U.S., Kety Esquivel with Latinos in Social Media, said capitalism has committed “abuses” because money, which was created for use as an exchange mechanism, ended up using people instead.

“I’m gringa, Mexican and Guatemalan,” Esquivel told IPS, describing her multi-ethnic origin and her stance in favour of humanity as a whole. (END/2010)

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