

CELAC Summit begins with tribute to Hugo Chavez

HAVANA, Cuba, Jan 28 (acn) The Second Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) began today with a tribute of the 33 member nations of the region for the late Commander Hugo Chávez.

Opening the great event, which runs today and tomorrow at the PABEXPO fairgrounds, Cuban President Raul Castro asked those present to a minute of silence in tribute to the memory of whom he described as one of the unforgettable leaders of our America.

Chavez was a fervent promoter of independence, integration, solidarity and unity of Latin America and the Caribbean, and the very creation of this community, Raul said.

Cuba Argues Chances of Eradicating Illiteracy in LatAm

HAVANA, Cuba, Jan 28 (acn) "We have all the opportunities, resources and methodologies to banish illiteracy from Latin America and the Caribbean," the President of the Councils of State and Ministers of Cuba Army General Raul Castro said today in this capital.

To achieve this goal, we must have the political will to do it and to provide our people the ability to access all levels of education, the Cuban leader said.

He said that nothing that we propose would be possible without an educated and cultured people.

He mentioned about the advantages that encourage the integration mechanisms in the region and their organizations, including MERCOSUR, ALBA, Petrocaribe, UNASUR, CARICOM and

others.

Raul gave the opening speech at the first session of the Second Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) , in the great hall of the PABEXPO fairgrounds.

Raul Castro Asks to Turn Riches into Development of LatAm

HAVANA, Cuba, Jan 28 (acn) Cuban President Raul Castro said today that all the wealth of Latin America and the Caribbean should become an engine for the elimination of existing inequalities in the region.

Opening in this capital the Second Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), Raul said it is an imperative and challenge to be able to transform all that physical capital in human capital.

Addressing the Heads of State and Government, as well as heads of delegations attending the great event, he called the bloc's member countries to exercise full sovereignty over natural resources, and consider appropriate policies in relation to foreign investment and transnational corporations in their nations.

He also referred to the significant gaps the educational sphere is facing in the region, but stressed that they have shown progress in access to primary education.

The Second Celac Summit will run for two days, and all LatAm and the Caribbean president will speak in this forum

Raul Meets with Visiting UN Secretary General Ban Ki- moon

HAVANA, Cuba, Jan 28 (acn) Army General Raul Castro, President of the councils of State and Ministers, met with Ban Ki- moon, Secretary General of the United Nations (UN), who is in Cuba to participate in the 2nd Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC).

During the meeting, held on Monday afternoon, the two parties spoke about different topics on the international agenda. Ban Ki- moon praised Cuba's performance as pro-tempore chairman of the CELAC; for his part, the Cuban head of state expressed his appreciation for the presence of the Secretary General on the island and reiterated Cuba's commitment to multilateralism, the UN Charter and International Law.

Accompanying the distinguished visitor were Susana Malcorra, associate secretary general and head of his cabinet; Barbara Pesce-Monteiro, resident coordinator of the UN system in Cuba and Alicia Barcenas, Executive Secretary of the CEPAL. Also present for Cuba were Cuban First Deputy Foreign Minister Marcelino Medina and Cuba's ambassador to the UN, Rodolfo Reyes.

Cuba's Efforts to Consolidate Unity, Highlighted

HAVANA, Cuba, Jan 27 (acn) The President of Costa Rica, Laura Chinchilla, highlighted on Monday in this capital the efforts made by Cuba to consolidate the unity of the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean.

At Havana's Jose Marti International Airport, Cuban Culture Minister Rafael Bernal welcomed the visitor, who will take part in the 2nd Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) that will be held on Tuesday and Wednesday at Pabexpo. Chinchilla took advantage of the occasion to send greetings to the Cuban people, highlighted her satisfaction for the possibility of being in the Caribbean nation, and thanked the host government for its cordial welcome.

Cuban Youngsters Honor Marti in Torch March

HAVANA, Cuba, Jan 28 (acn) Army General Raul Castro, President of the councils of State and Ministers and thousands of Cuban youngsters participated on Monday night in a Torch March to pay tribute to Jose Marti, on the occasion of the 161st anniversary of his birth.

Also present to honor the Cuban National Hero were the presidents of Venezuela, Nicolas Maduro; Bolivia, Evo Morales; Uruguay, Jose Mujica, and other dignitaries of Latin America and prime ministers of Caribbean nations.

Participants in the march left from the steps of the University of Havana towards the Fragua Martiana Museum –a National Monument-, where the Apostle suffered a prison sentence, a few hours before the beginning of the 2nd Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), scheduled for January 28 and 29 in this capital.

Fidel Holds Fraternal Meeting with Dilma Rousseff

HAVANA, Cuba, Jan 27 (acn) The historic leader of the Revolution, Fidel Castro, held on Monday evening a fraternal meeting with the President of the Federative Republic of Brazil Dilma Rousseff, who heads her country's delegation to the 2nd Summit of the CELAC and carries out an official visit to Cuba.

In a pleasant dialogue, Dilma expressed her particular motivation to attend the inauguration of the first stage of the Special development Zone of Mariel. She referred to its importance for Cuba and said it is a concrete example of the process of integration taking place between peoples in the region. Dilma also expressed her satisfaction for the performance of Cuban physicians in the most isolated places of Brazil.

Other topics of interest on the international agenda were tackled during the fruitful exchange.

The meeting was an expression of the affection and admiration existing between Fidel and Dilma.

Fidel Receives the Prime Minister of Jamaica

HAVANA, Cuba, Jan 28 (acn) On Monday evening, the historic leader of the Revolution, Fidel Castro, received President Portia Simpson Miller, who heads the Jamaican delegation to the 2nd Summit of the CELAC and carries out an official visit to Cuba.

During the friendly meeting, Fidel and Portia Simpson recalled the historic relations existing between Cuba and Jamaica and highlighted the development of cooperation in important spheres like health, education and sports, among others. The meeting was also an expression of the bonds of fraternity existing between the two peoples.

Cuba and Brazil Expand Medical Cooperation

HAVANA, Cuba, Jan 28 (acn) The fourth brigade of Cuban health specialists will soon travel to Brazil to offer its services in that South American nation.

This time, 2,000 volunteer workers in this sphere will join the program More Physicians for Brazil, announced Cuban Public Health Minister Roberto Morales, who gave the contingent its banner during a ceremony held at the Central Unit of Medical Cooperation.

Once they start offering their services there, there will be 7,430 Cuban health workers in Brazil contributing to increase the quality of life of its inhabitants, even in isolated places like in the state of the Amazon.

During the meeting, Brazilian Health Minister Alexander Rocha Santos Padilla expressed that

his people appreciates the presence of these physicians since the arrival of the first group in August, 2013, the devotion and excellent service of which is acknowledged by the Brazilian government and people, he asserted.

The CEPAL to Accompany the Region's Development Agenda

HAVANA, Cuba, Jan 27 (acn) Alicia Barcena, Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL), expressed on Monday in this capital the commitment of that center of studies with regional development.

While handing over a document entitled Economic and Social Panorama of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), 2013, during a meeting of foreign ministers of the countries that are members of that initiative of integration, the official recalled that the CEPAL has accompanied CELAC from the start.

The head of the CEPAL also presented to the foreign ministers of the nations making up the CELAC, met at Pabexpo, the study entitled Natural Resources: situation and tendencies for a regional development agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean.

With these two documents, the CEPAL hopes to contribute to the debates that will take place during the CELAC meeting and that they become a permanent annual publication that accompanies every CELAC summit, asserted Barcenas.

Created in 1948, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean is one of the five UN regional commissions in charge of promoting the economic and social development of the region, and works as a center of studies.

Ban Ki-moon says UN will work with Cuba

HAVANA, Cuba, Jan 27 (acn) Ban Ki-moon, Secretary General of the United Nations (UN) for the first time in Cuba on an official visit, reiterated in this capital the willingness of the international body to work together with Cuba

The distinguished visitor held a cordial exchange Monday with Marino Murillo Jorge, vice president of the Council of Ministers, head of the Commission for Implementation and Development of Guidelines for Economic and Social Policy of the Party and the Revolution.

Ban Ki-moon attended the meeting accompanied by Alicia Barcenas, Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

Both personalities will participate in the Second Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), which will be held on January 28 and, in the Havana's PABEXPO Fairgrounds.

Ban Ki-moon acknowledged the efforts of the Cuban nation to boost crucial economic and social changes, and inquired about the progress of the important transformations underway.

Murillo, meanwhile, said it is an honor to have an exchange with the Secretary General of United Nations, and asserted that Cuba recognizes and appreciates the international cooperation of the UN, through its development agencies, and praised the actions UN promotes in favor of implementing the resolutions adopted by its Member States.

The Vice President of the Council of Ministers highlighted the particularly extensive exchange and cooperation between the island and ECLAC, which will continue to spread in the future.

Ban Ki -moon Rates Cuban Med School As the Most Advanced in the World

HAVANA, Cuba, Jan (acn) Ban Ki -moon , Secretary General of the UN told young students of the Latin American School of Medicine (ELAM) they should feel " very fortunate and grateful " to be able to be part of that institution, "the most advanced in the world ."

Accompanied by Alicia Barcena, Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) , the high official visited the renowned campus , where he was received by Dr. Roberto Morales, Minister of Public Health.

Ban Ki -moon thanked Cuba for its "great contributions" in health , and be at the forefront of South- South cooperation , and the first line of medicine worldwide.

He said he has seen the Cuban doctors working in difficult places, and communities plunged into despair by natural disasters.

Too often they are the first to reach the neediest places and the last to leave, he said.

He stated that Cuba can teach the world about the health system, and acknowledged its contribution in opening medical schools in other countries.

He highlighted the achievements of the Caribbean nation, which exhibits a low infant mortality rate, high life expectancy, and universal health coverage.

He also acknowledged the Cuban cooperation in Haiti and African nations, as well as its participation in Operation Miracle, a mission that has helped restore sight to thousands of people.

Ki-moon held a warm and fraternal contact with students, whom he urged to learn all they can, to seize the opportunity given to them by Cuba, and to work with the United Nations to make this a healthier and stronger world.

Ban Ki-moon meets with Fidel Castro

HAVANA, Cuba, Jan 29 (acn) The historic leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro Ruz , received the Secretary General of the United Nations , Ban Ki -moon , who is attending as a guest the Second Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean , CELAC .

At the meeting yesterday afternoon they addressed various issues that strongly influence regional conflicts that concern and affect different people, Granma newspaper reported.

Fidel and Ban Ki -moon considered as a priority the work for the sustainable development and to contribute to the reduction of the main causes of climate change and its devastating effects.

They agreed on the imperative of fighting with concrete measures for nuclear disarmament and against the dangers to humanity that can lead to a war of incalculable proportions.

During the meeting they argued the need for a world of peace and stressed the responsibility that political leaders have to reduce extreme poverty, hunger, poor health, inequality and promote economic and social development.

The distinguished visitor expressed his satisfaction with his stay in Cuba, praised the changes that are taking place in the Cuban economy and society and, in particular, recognized the results of our country's health system, education and other essential indicators of social development, and their solidarity with other nations, despite the limitations and difficulties.

Ban Ki -moon stressed the fulfillment by the Cuban Government of the Millennium Development Goals and its ongoing collaboration with the United Nations System.

The meeting was characterized by a deep and relaxed dialogue.

Fidel Receives Prime Minister of Saint Lucia

HAVANA, Cuba, Jan 29 (acn) Fidel Castro Ruz, historical leader of the Revolution, received on Tuesday night the Honourable Dr. Kenny Davis Anthony, Prime Minister of St. Lucia, who is attending the second Summit of CELAC.

According to Granma newspaper, the fraternal meeting was an expression of the historical relations between Cuba and Santa Lucia, characterized by an unchanging spirit of cooperation and solidarity between our governments and peoples. Other important issues on the international agenda were also addressed in the dialogue.

Kenny Anthony expressed his eternal gratitude to Cuba for the support in the training of doctors, nurses, engineers and other professionals and the contribution to the social development of the sister Caribbean country.

The exchange took place in a friendly atmosphere and sincere friendship.

Ban Ki-Moon stressed Celac Contribution to Peace

HAVANA, Cuba, January 28 (acn) United Nations secretary general Ban Ki-moon stressed the commitment of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) to contribute to peace and security. "I'm pleased to see the development of Colombia's peace negotiations.

I salute the efforts of so many contries to help Haiti" said Ban and he recalled that Latin America pioneered the unexistence of nuclear wepons.

Everyday safety of citizens on the streets continue to be a challenge for the region, Ban said and added that he was satisfied to see the important debate underway on the issue of drug trafficking. "You are contributing a very particular perspective,"he noted and went on to say that

if CELAC strengthen the United Nations will strengthen too.

“I am dreaming with my eyes wide open day and night. I always dream. Let’s advance with the best feelings towards the construction of a world of peace, development and human rights for all.”

Rafael Correa: Integration is no longer a dream

HAVANA, Cuba, Jan 29 (acn) The integration is no longer a dream and a desire for our Liberator , is a great need,Rafael Correa, President of Ecuador , said in an interview with the multinational Telesur network.

From the newsroom of the Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) he said that “our America must shake off all neocolonialism.”

"The most abundant are still those neocolonial attempts and the only way to protect ourselves from that world order is the integration," the leader of the Citizen Revolution said, before hundreds of journalists that were watching the live interview.

Correa stressed the need for Latin American and Caribbean countries to face colonial impositions such as the United States over Puerto Rico , and reiterated that the for fight against colonialism cohesion is inescapable and " the conviction to build the Patria Grande”

He urged for a greater unity between the governments of Latin America and the Caribbean to reject interference and international intervention.

He added that there are genuine integrationist sentiments in the governments of different trends, real conviction for democracy and the problems of the region must be addressed in the bodies of the area as the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), the Bolivarian Alliance

for the peoples Americas or CELAC.

The president said that coinciding with the anniversary 161 of the birth of José Martí, in his country they remembered today the national hero Eloy Alfaro, at 102 years of the death of former president of the Andean nation who was murdered in tragic circumstances

Mexican Peña Nieto Urges LatAm to Unite in Defense of CELAC

HAVANA, Cuba, Jan 29 (acn) Enrique Peña Nieto, President of Mexico, urged to unite in the defense of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) , a space for political dialogue to ensure the development of the entire region in a constructive and mutually respectful climate.

I pray that this space we are feeding may contribute to give everyone in the area a future of greater development and prosperity, the Mexican president said speaking at the first plenary session of the Second Summit of Celac.

Before heads of state and government officials and high level representatives of the 33 member countries of CELAC, Peña Nieto referred to the need to maintain the existing approach, which took decades to build, and considered it as the realization of a dream of many at last achieved.

He called to be ambitious in the future goals of greater commercial integrity that this entity arises , something possible, he said , in response to the potential of the region, currently with a market activity 20 percent higher than the European Union's

He said the consolidation of CELAC as regional integration mechanism is a desire shared by Summit participants, and said that it is "worth designing actions that advance the common goal of ensuring prosperity for our peoples."

After weighing the dynamic economic growth that the region exhibits, he drew attention; however, on the challenges it faces in terms of hunger, poverty and inequality, which highlights the need to promote agendas of inclusive growth, to reduce levels of inequality.

He also tackled the main results in the first year of his administration, among which he cited the reduction of people living in extreme poverty and the reforms in education, finances, telecommunications and energy.

He considered productivity as a key element to ensure the development and insisted on greater attention to this indicator, in order to turn the region into a more competitive area.

Cuba: Venezuela Museum Opens in tribute to Hugo Chavez

HAVANA, Cuba, Jan 29 (acn) Cuban President Raúl Castro led in this capital a tribute to the late Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez before the last day of sessions of the Second Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC).

Nicolas Maduro , President of Venezuela, and other heads of state and government of the region, attended the inauguration of the Venezuela, Free Land Museum , located in the Cabaña Fortress, located to the east of Havana City.

At the event, Maduro said the initiative is a true act of love by the Cuban people and its authorities, to remember a dear friend, a man whose traces are still fresh and whose voice echoes in our America.

Chavez was a great warrior of the light, of the ideas , which reunited the roads lost 200 years ago, and taught us that history is not only a testament to the past but is alive and is a continuous process , he said.

He explained that the purpose of this space is to remember the story of a rebel, a fighter, his path through Venezuela and Latin America, which continues to set the path of solidarity and true unity in diversity.

Commander President Hugo Chavez was one of the biggest drivers of CELAC as a mechanism of coordination and integration, release and development of nations south of the Rio Bravo.

The facility has two rooms, with plenty of artwork on the progress of Venezuela in 15 years of revolution and also the life of this remarkable man, from his childhood in Barinas, until his physical disappearance on March 5, 2013.

The President of Guatemala Calls to Fight Poverty in the Area

HAVANA, Cuba, Jan 28 (acn) Otto Perez, President of Guatemala, called on Tuesday to join efforts among the governments of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) to fight poverty and hunger, the most serious problems faced by countries in the region.

During a brief meeting with some media outlets accredited to the 2nd CELAC Summit, inaugurated on Tuesday at Pabexpo, west of the capital, Perez highlighted his country's efforts in the struggle against that scourge, and added: "we have what we call a zero hunger pact to prevent the chronic and acute malnutrition of our children under five years of age."

He specified that unity will make it possible to progress in the struggle against poverty and announced that that during his stay in Cuba he will hold a meeting with the Cuban President, Army General Raul Castro, to tackle matters of common interest.

The head of state recalled that the island cooperates with Guatemala in public health and education.

The search for concrete actions to eradicate the hunger and poverty of the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean is one of the main topics of debate at the Summit.

The issue of children's poverty, which affects 70.5 million children and adolescents, is of particular interest in the area, according to the Cuban President during the opening of the forum.

France Stresses Importance of CELAC for Europe

HAVANA, Cuba, Jan 29 (acn) The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) is a very important partner for the European Union and both maintain close and timely dialogue marked by a biennial summit in Paris, a spokesman of the French Foreign Ministry said today.

In statements published by Prensa Latina on the Summit which will end today in Havana, the official, Romain Nadal , said that France is very interested in the work of this new political forum

The CELAC, which brings together 33 States, is an important aspiration of the unity of the region, which claims its emergence in the stability and democracy, Nadal said.

The spokesman recalled that France had greeted the birth of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States since its inception in 2011.

CELAC and the European Union (EU) held their first summit in Santiago, Chile in January 2013, which was attended by the head of the French government, prime Minister Jean Marc Ayrault .

France has made its relations with Latin America one of the priorities of its foreign policy, Nadal highlighted.

Proclamation of Latin America and Caribbean as a zone of peace

(Original signed by the Heads of State and Government of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States)

The Heads of State and Government of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) gathered in Havana, Cuba on January 28 and 29, 2014 at the Second Summit, on behalf of their peoples and faithfully interpreting their hopes and aspirations,

Reaffirming the commitment of member countries with the Purposes and Principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter and International Law, and aware of the fact that prosperity and stability in the region contribute to international peace and security,

Mindful that peace is a supreme asset and a legitimate aspiration of all peoples and that preserving peace is a substantial element of Latin America and Caribbean integration and a principle and common value of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC),

Reaffirming that integration consolidates the vision of a fair International order based on the right to peace and a culture of peace, which excludes the use of force and non-legitimate means of defense, such as weapons of mass destruction and nuclear weapons in particular,

Highlighting the relevance of the Tlatelolco Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean establishing the first nuclear weapon free zone in a densely populated area, this being a contribution to peace and to regional and international security,

Reiterating the urgent need of General and Complete Nuclear Disarmament, as well as the commitment with the Strategic Agenda of the Organization for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL), adopted by the 33 Member States of

the Organization in the General Conference held in Buenos Aires in August, 2013.

Recalling the principles of peace, democracy, development and freedom underlying the actions of countries members of SICA,

Recalling the decision of UNASUR Heads of State of consolidating South America as a Zone of Peace and Cooperation,

Recalling the establishment, in 1986, of the Zone of Peace and Cooperation of the South Atlantic,

Recalling also our commitment, agreed in the Declaration of the Summit of Unity of Latin America and the Caribbean, on 23 February 2010, to promote the implementation of our own mechanisms for the for peaceful conflict resolution,

Reiterating our commitment to consolidate Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace, in which differences between nations are peacefully settled through dialogue and negotiations or other means, fully consistent with International Law,

Cognizant also of the catastrophic global and long-term humanitarian impact of the use of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, and the ongoing discussions on this issue, Declare:

1. Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace based on respect for the principles and rules of International Law, including the international instruments to which Member States are a party to, the Principles and Purposes of the United Nations Charter;
2. Our permanent commitment to solve disputes through peaceful means with the aim of uprooting forever threat or use of force in our region;
3. The commitment of the States of the region with their strict obligation not to intervene, directly or indirectly, in the internal affairs of any other State and observe the principles of national sovereignty, equal rights and self-determination of peoples;

4. The commitment of the peoples of Latin American and Caribbean to foster cooperation and friendly relations among themselves and with other nations irrespective of differences in their political, economic, and social systems or development levels; to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbors;
5. The commitment of the Latin American and Caribbean States to fully respect for the inalienable right of every State to choose its political, economic, social, and cultural system, as an essential conditions to ensure peaceful coexistence among nations;
6. The promotion in the region of a culture of peace based, inter alia, on the principles of the United Nations Declaration on a Culture of Peace;
7. The commitment of the States in the region to guide themselves by this Declaration in their International behavior;
8. The commitment of the States of the region to continue promoting nuclear disarmament as a priority objective and to contribute with general and complete disarmament, to foster the strengthening of confidence among nations;

We urge all Member States of the International Community to fully respect this Declaration in their relations with CELAC Member States.

In witness of the undersigned having duly signed this Proclamation in Havana, on the 29th day of the month of January of 2014, in a copy written in the Spanish, English, French and Portuguese languages.

(Cuban News Agency)