

Final Declaration
XVIII Meeting of the Forum of São Paulo

Declaration of Caracas

Peoples of the world, against neoliberalism and for peace

- The XVIII Meeting of the Forum of São Paulo, gathered in Caracas on the 4th, 5th, and 6th of July, 2012, is held amidst a severe structural crisis of capitalism, concurrent with a dispute for geopolitical and geostrategic spaces, the rise of new centres of power, threats against world peace and the military and intrusive aggressiveness exerted by imperialism in its attempt to reverse its own decline. Furthermore, environmental, energetic and food crises, as well as the crisis undergone by systems of political representation add to the economic crisis. All of these situations demand a firm response by the Latin American and Caribbean peoples along with effective action taken by progressive, popular and left-wing forces.
- The world economic crisis is far from being surmounted. The Heads of international financial institutions cling on the neoliberal dogma. The United States hard landing and the stall of the European economic engine entail effects that are already being felt in vast regions, even in the vigorous Chinese economy. The Latin America and the Caribbean are no strangers to the negative impact of the world crisis, although social and economic policies implemented by most of their governments have averted a greater impact.
- In regions such as Europe and the United States, neoliberalism is still the ideological cornerstone of their economic policies, advancing its principles of ongoing austerity and prioritizing financial capital. On the other hand, in Latin America, progressive and left-wing forces run the destinies of a significant portion of the nations in the area and launch initiatives that have made it possible to prevail –to some extent– over the “long neoliberal night”. They have achieved undeniable success in the struggle against poverty and have promoted an unprecedented integration process by underpinning far-reaching social welfare plans. The challenge lies in maintaining the continuity and further development of these changes during the current downturn.
- Imperialism and the Right try to offset the growth of democratic, popular, progressive and left-wing forces in Latin America and the Caribbean in several ways, for example, with the systematic aggression of the United States government, the manipulation and criminalization of social demands in order to spur violent confrontations and a counter-offensive to stage coups.
- It is worth mentioning that in Bolivia there have been two attempted coups and one attempted assassination in addition to the police mutiny that was recently quelled by social movements. Other coup-related events are as follow: in 2002, President Chavez was ousted for 47 hours and in June, 2009, President Zelaya was deposed; in September, 2010 there was an attempted coup in Ecuador that was not carried through thanks to the immediate mobilisation of Ecuadorian people and the prompt intervention of the international community. It was only a few weeks ago that Paraguayan President Fernando Lugo was

ousted. The coup in Honduras and Fernando Lugo's removal from office are a clear sign that the Right is willing to resort to violent means and/ or manipulation of institutional paths in order to overthrow those governments that are not subservient to its interests.

- Likewise, the Right has launched a widespread media campaign carried out through powerful media holdings. The regional political agenda recurrently addresses the attitude displayed by right-wing media. Large corporations devise destabilising plans and play the role of loci of power, with the ability to place themselves above public authorities elected by universal suffrage. Democracy and its institutions are defied by large media holdings day in and day out. This is probably one of the greatest challenges lying ahead of left-wing governments: democratising media.
- Simultaneously, several overwhelming triumphs at the ballot box reflect the step forward made by progressive and left-wing forces, as seen in the victories of Dilma Ruseff in Brazil, Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua, Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner in Argentina and Danilo Medina in Dominican Republic.
- Few days ago, Presidents Dilma Russef, Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner and Jose Mujica decided to suspend Paraguayan coup government from MERCOSUR until democracy is restored; at the same time, they agreed to admit Venezuela as a full member of the region's most important political and economic bloc.
- Predictably, the admission of Ecuador to the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR by its acronym in Spanish) is to be approved in a relatively near future; this would entail a new reality. The Southern bloc would gain access to the Pacific in addition to its newly-established presence in the Caribbean, ensuing from the admission of Venezuela.
- Meanwhile, Heads of State of those countries that make up the Andean Community of Nations try to gain ground on the road to integration, although they will have to overcome formidable difficulties.
- The Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our Americas (ALBA by its acronym in Spanish) blends common economic policies, like a common currency (Sucre), a Reserve Fund, Petrocaribe and, recently, its presidents decided to create an ALBA economic zone. This is a milestone in the integrative endeavour made by Antigua and Barbuda, Bolivia, Cuba, Ecuador, Dominica, Nicaragua, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Venezuela.
- The efforts displayed by the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR by its acronym in Spanish) are both surprising and encouraging. A set of integrative initiatives has been introduced, including the drawing up of a common defence policy that will correlate defence with the development and preservation of Latin America as a peace zone, nuclear-weapons free. At the same time, advances have been evidenced in the construction of an economic architecture supported on the pillars of complementarity, cooperation, respect for sovereignty and solidarity.

- The charter meeting of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC by its acronym in Spanish), which was held in Caracas in December, 2011, stands as a turning point in the integrative process. The agreement signals the dawn of a work programme endorsed in search of common ground, and stresses the need of unity since it is unanimously acknowledged that there is only one way out of the problems shared: integration.
- In view of the failure of ALCA and the limited accomplishments of bilateral free trade agreements, imperialism seeks to weaken Latin and South American integration mechanisms by bolstering the Pacific Alliance.
- Integration rests on a political basis; it is a reaction to a changing reality and has material basis on its side, featuring production forces and myriads of plentiful natural resources: forests, oil, all kinds of minerals, rare earths, vast extensions of grazing and arable lands. Above all, what integration has on its side is cultural and human diversity represented by more than 500 million people. The integration process must ensure that common policies be agreed upon, related to sovereign management and use of natural resources, including the defence of water and its acknowledgement as a human right.
- As part of the Forum of São Paulo agenda, a vital issue arises: the need to reach agreement on a common policy in the field of sustainable development within the frame of science and technology, and inclusionary human development prioritising women, children and youth.
- Due to the sheer magnitude of renewable and non-renewable natural resources available in our region, we have to reinforce the defence of the environment and set out on the road to large-scale industrial, technological and scientific development while ensuring observance of native peoples' rights, among them, their right to consultation.
- The Right attempts to symbolically hijack the discourse that advocates the defence of the environment, trying to conceal neoliberal policies –predatory on Mother Earth– and the outstanding environmental debt that capitalism owes the world. An intense struggle unfolds for the control of these natural riches.
- In the next few months several elections will be held, like Nicaragua's in November 2012 for municipal authorities. In February 2013 there will be general elections in Ecuador, where President Rafael Correa is running for a second term; the Forum of São Paulo has committed to offer its solidarity and complete support.
- The Forum of São Paulo also calls for the defence of democracy in Mexico. Once again, the Mexican right resorted to media manipulation with rigged polls, massive vote buying, and other types of fraud that distorted the presidential election held on July 1st. All with a view to impose a candidate that was opposed to the best interests of the Mexican people. The FSP pleads that the allegations raised by progressive parties be thoroughly investigated.

- The central battlefield in the upcoming months will be Venezuela, where elections are to be held on October 7th. Striking popular mobilisations were the hallmark of the onset of the campaign, showing support for Chavez's candidacy and the programme he has proposed. All opinion polls give Hugo Chavez a clear lead of 20 points over the right-wing candidate. With elections only a few months away, the Right takes Hugo Chavez's electoral triumph for granted. For this reason, while the Right takes part in the electoral process is setting the stage to disavow both the result and the National Electoral Council. Faced with this situation, the Forum of São Paulo summons progressive and left-wing forces to support Venezuelan democracy and to reject the destabilising attempts made by the Right.
- Left-wing, popular, progressive and democratic parties members of the Forum of São Paulo reassert their support for the relationships advanced by the government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, characterized by friendship, fraternity, solidarity, integrationist cooperation, and of utmost respect for national sovereignties. In that context, they firmly deny the groundless accusations of state interference that the illegitimate Paraguayan government has made against Chancellor Nicolas Maduro.
- The Forum of São Paulo will have to tackle overwhelming tactical and strategic challenges. To meet those challenges, we count on the strength represented in the attendance to this XVIII Meeting, with 800 delegates, from 100 parties and organizations from 50 countries from the five continents.
- During the 4th, 5th and 6th of July, this impressive delegation engaged in dozens of activities, the highlights being: the meetings of the South Cone, Andean-Amazonic, and the Caribbean Regional Offices. Thematic workshops focused on: African Descendants; Local and Regional Authorities; Defence; Information and Media Democratization; Foundations, Schools or Training Centres; Environment and Climate Change; Migration; Labour Union Movements; Social Movements and Popular Power; Native Peoples; Agri-Food Safety; Security and Drug Trafficking; Workers of the Arts and Culture; Latin American and Caribbean Union and Integration. The First Women's Encounter, the Fourth Youth Encounter and the Seminar on Peace, National Sovereignty and Decolonization.
- The minutes of each one of these meetings and activities, the corresponding resolutions, the Charter, as well as the motions and the Closing Statement will be published in the records of the XVIII Meeting. There are some resolutions we would like to foreground.
- The left-wing, progressive and anti-imperialist parties that are members of the Forum of São Paulo acknowledge that: the presence and participation of women in different areas in society –including parties– is essential to the strengthening, growth and development of that society. It is simply not possible to build socialism (or a socialist, fair and egalitarian society) if those traditional roles and patterns historically assigned to and adopted by men and women are not modified; it is equally important to create the necessary conditions to

uproot the bases of discrimination against women and to promote equal opportunities for men as well as women to participate in both private and public sectors. An appropriate gender approach and feminist agenda as developed by left-wing and revolutionary women are still pending inclusion into the policies, programmes and actions designed in the struggle against the Right and against predatory, patriarchal capitalism and into the construction of socialism.

- From its very inception, the Forum has clearly and categorically acknowledged Argentine sovereignty over Malvinas. The XVIII Meeting endorses the request to open up diplomatic negotiations between Argentina and the United Kingdom besides upholding the Latin American protest for the actions undertaken by the British government in a zone declared free of nuclear weapons. Similarly, the FSP condemns the colonial situation several Latin American and Caribbean nations immersed in. We equally repudiate re-colonization attempts.
- The FSP backs the demand of the people and the government of Bolivia for the recognition of their right to gain access to the Pacific Ocean.
- Left-wing parties gathered in the Forum and all social movements are responsible to deploy all initiatives within our reach so as to turn the issue of Puerto Rico's independence into a central item in the United Nations agenda. It is unthinkable that in the 21st century there are still colonial enclaves in our region and the world. We join in the demand for the release from prison of Puerto Rican political detainee Oscar Lopez Rivera, incarcerated in United States prisons for 31 years now, whose sole "crime" was fighting for his land's independence.
- This Assembly has the duty to implement new tasks and a joint action plan against the American blockade of Cuba and for the freedom of the Five Heroes, a flag hoisted by us all.
- The Forum of São Paulo voices its support for the people of Nicaragua and its government, who are confronted with the threat of a financial embargo should the United States withdraw the exemption they grant or deny every year as an arbitrary instrument of extortion, by their veto power in multilateral organisms. The United States seek to impose their political decisions in areas that are the exclusive prerogative of Nicaraguans in their exercise of sovereign powers.
- The Forum of São Paulo manifests its support for the Bolivian people and comrade President Evo Morales Ayma in the defence of democracy and the profound process of change that he is leading accompanied by social movements and popular sectors
- The Forum of São Paulo states its support and active solidarity with the people of Paraguay, the Guasu Front and the Front for the Defence of Democracy, and the peasants movement; the FSP similarly disavows the *de facto* government headed by Federico Franco and announces actions on continental level in favour of democracy, respect for the popular will expressed in April,

2008 and in favour of the unity and integration of the peoples and governments of Latin America and the Caribbean.

- The Forum of São Paulo manifests its solidarity with the Haitian people in their struggle to recover their dignity and national sovereignty. Only through the consolidation of state structures will Haiti overcome the current crisis. The successful outcome of this process is contingent upon the support of both left-wing governments and Latin American and Caribbean peoples as well as the planned withdrawal of foreign military forces from Haitian territory. Haiti's surmounting this crisis calls for our technological, humanitarian and material aid.
- The Forum of São Paulo expresses its support for the peace process in Colombia, where the endeavour continues to reach a political solution to the armed conflict, to attain peace coexisting with social justice, and a new social and economic model that guarantees that human rights and nature be protected. It is hereby decided to establish a commission representative of the movements and political parties members of the Forum of São Paulo that –by prior mutual agreement with Colombian parties and movements– will visit the country and put forth an agenda including assessment, contacts and support for unity projects.
- The Forum of São Paulo asserts its complete support and solidarity with the Saharawi people in the defence of their self-determination, sovereignty and national independence.
- The Forum of São Paulo expresses its support for the struggle for sovereignty and self-determination of Palestine and its admission to the United Nations as a full member.
- We vigorously oppose any foreign armed intervention in Syria and Iran and we summon progressive and left-wing forces to safeguard peace in the region.
- The XVIII Meeting of the Forum of São Paulo concludes with a bid to all peoples to join in the struggle against neoliberalism and wars, to build a world of peace, democracy and social justice. A different world is possible and we are building it: a socialist world.